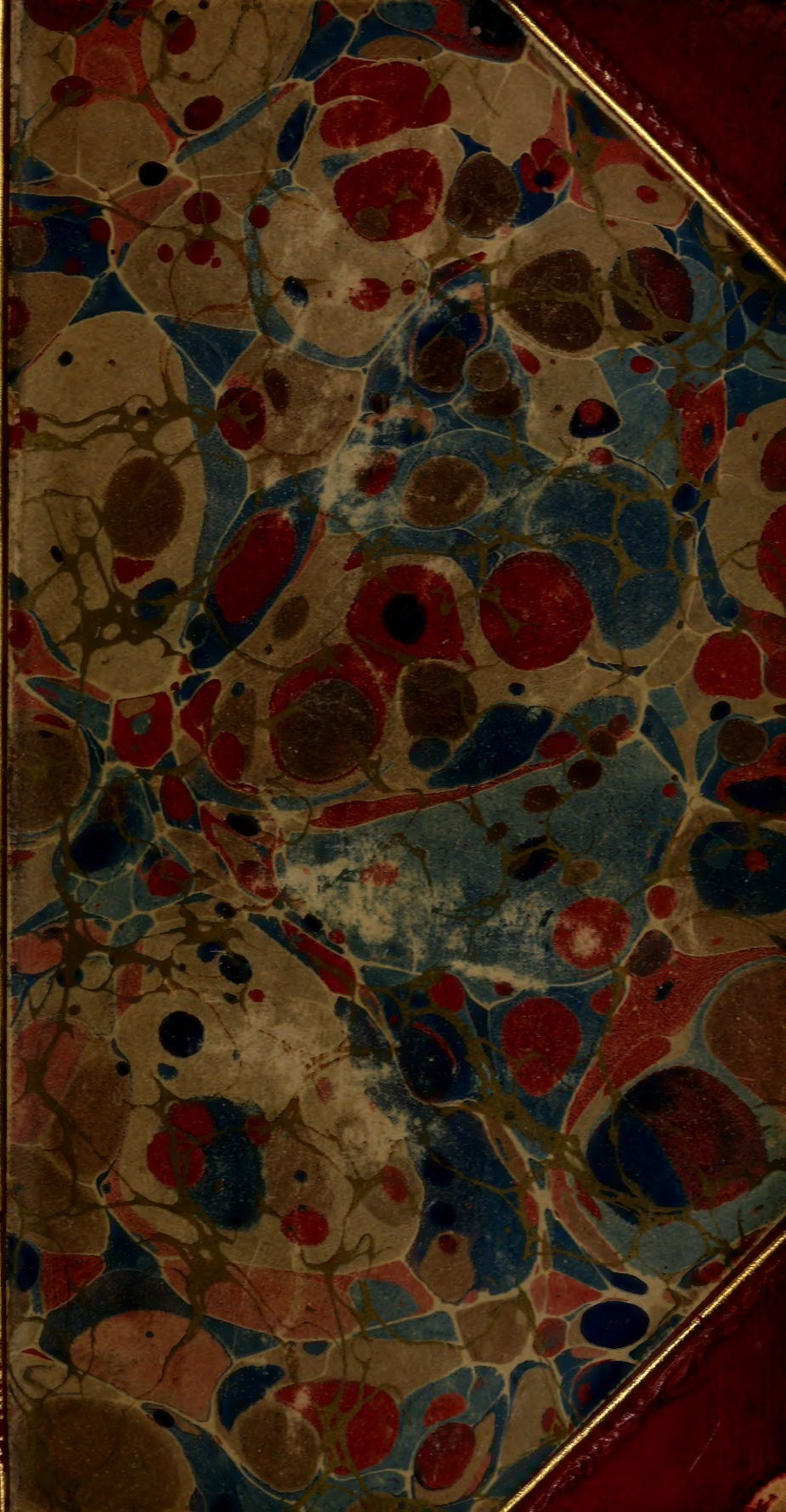
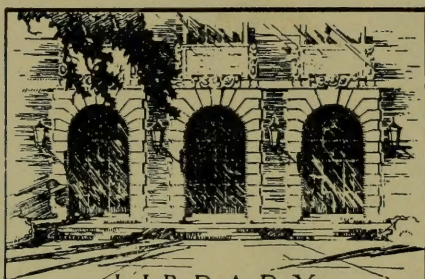


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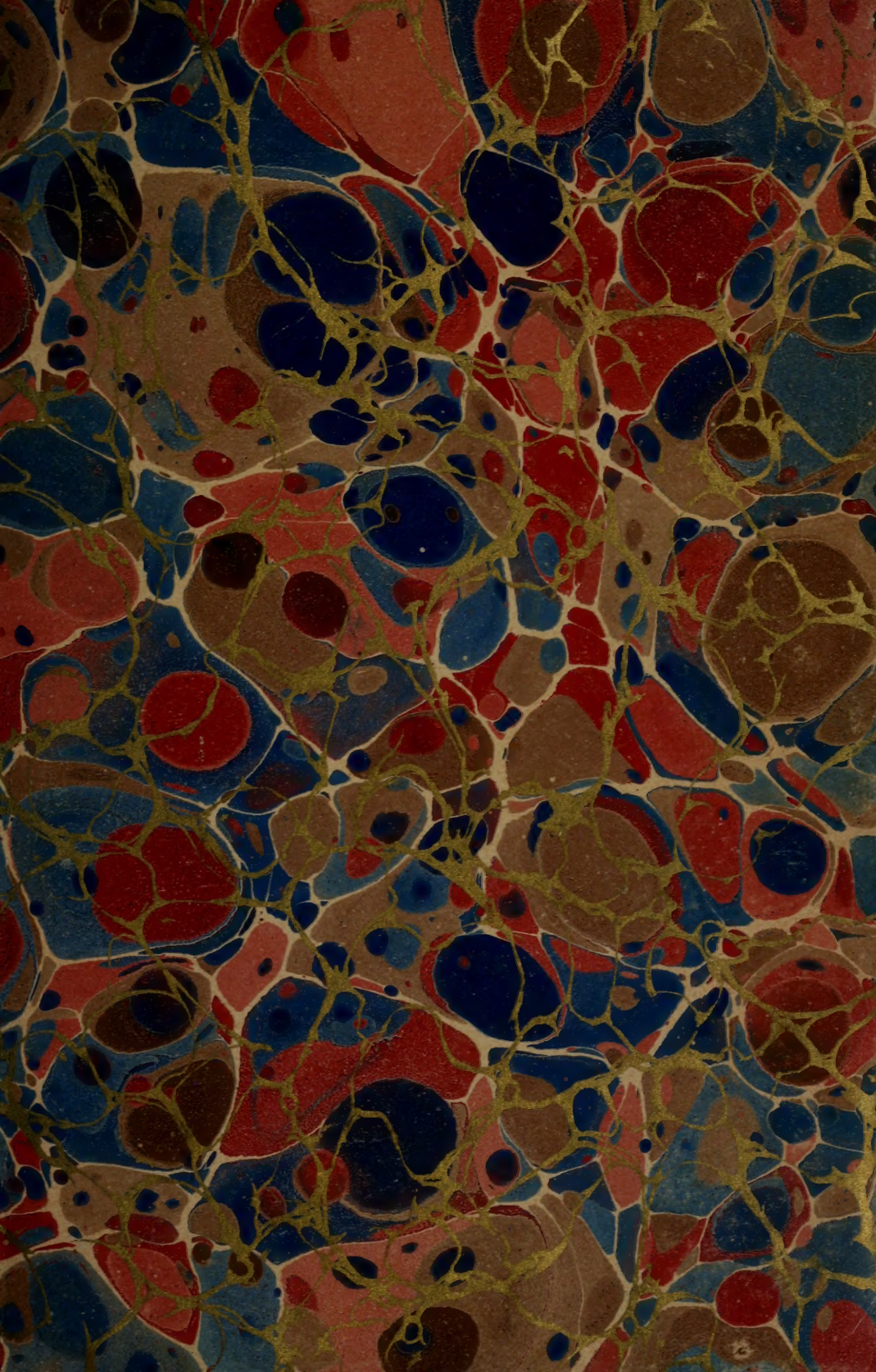


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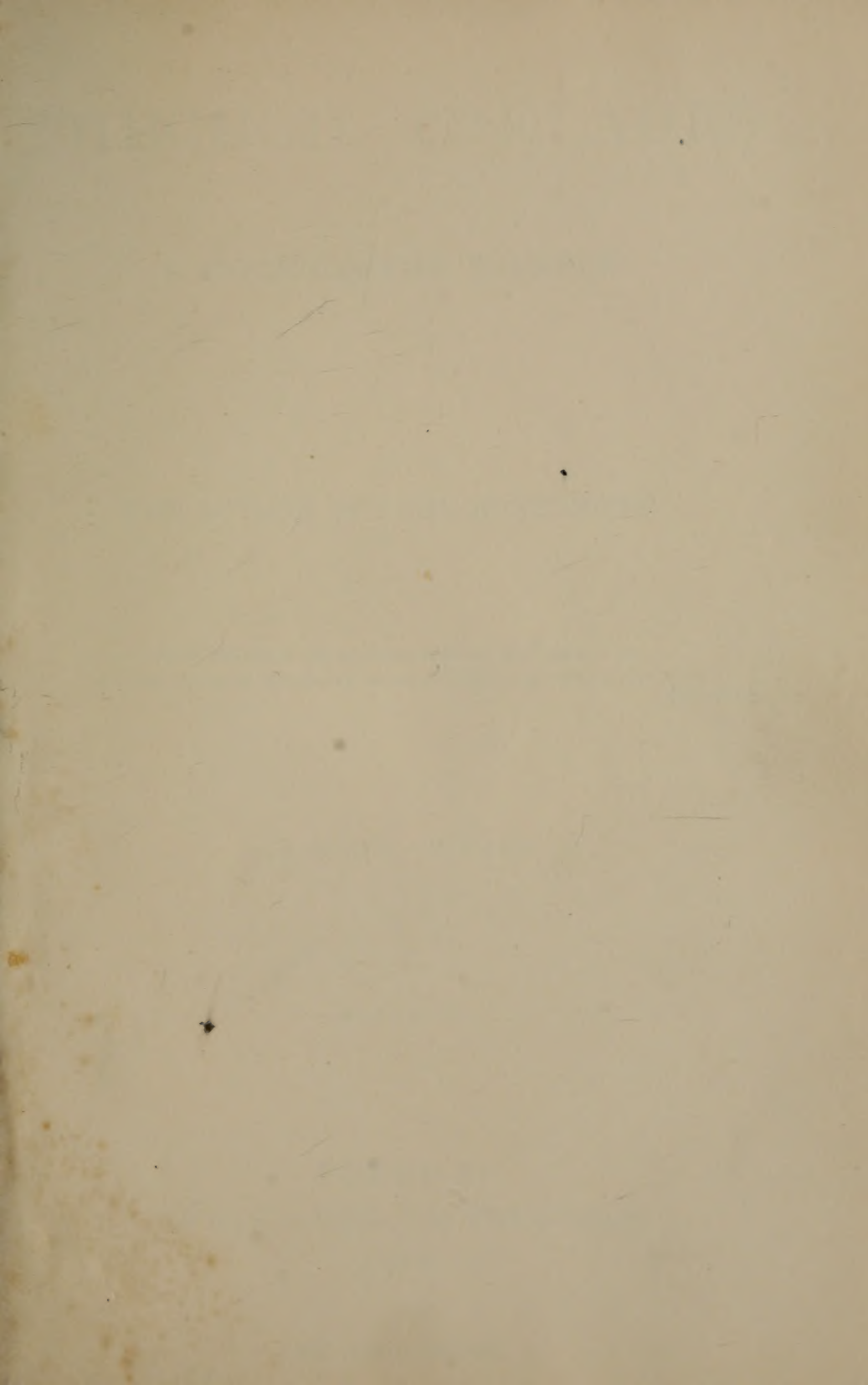
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THROUGH THE AGES

A PSYCHOLOGICAL ROMANCE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE HONEYMOON,"

"—— I doubt not, thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns."

TENNYSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOLUME III.

LONDON:

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1876.

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THE MORRO CASTLE.

I.

“ I know a maiden fair to see,
Take care !
She can both false and friendly be,
Beware !
Trust her not,
She is fooling thee ! ”

From the German.

ONE day, while I was still at the Hotel San Carlos in the Havana, I awoke from a refreshing sleep to find the room inundated by the blinding rays of a tropical sun, this was because I had forgotten to close the venetian blinds over night. I now got up and shut them, for the light was indeed too dazzling, and began to dress.

About twelve o'clock, when I was finishing breakfast in the cool marble hall, which formed the dining-room of the hotel, I was suddenly startled by the touch of a soft hand on my shoulder. I naturally turned and looked round, when to my astonishment I found myself face to face with Miss de Fison..

“ Good morning,” she said ; “ hot, I guess ! ”

“What an unexpected pleasure!” was all I could answer at that moment.

“Oh, you vainest of men!” she exclaimed, bursting into a merry laugh; and in that sweet high pitched nasal tone peculiar to young American ladies, which at first sounds so extraordinary to us Europeans, but with the natural grace of a woman who wishes to be thought charming, and is sure of success, she said, “Why, if he does not imagine that I have come here to see *him*! No, no; how can you be so conceited! I have come to see Mrs Herbert, the Consul’s wife; but she is not at home, or at least so I am told; but I must be off now, as Father, and lots of men, are waiting for me at the *Machina*. I am off—off right away.”

There are some faces that we cannot help admiring, even if we fail to see any particular charm in them, and such a face was that of Wilhelmina de Fison. I have often heard her beauty disputed. I have even heard her called plain, though, it is true, only by Lilian Leigh; but I never heard any one deny that she was most striking, and always certain to attract attention even where she failed in winning admiration. She had a beautiful lithe figure, which she always dressed in the height of Parisian fashion. She possessed the most beautiful dark brown hair, which she coiled in a profusion of twists and plaits on the top of her

head, after combing it up straight from the back of her swan-like neck, one long, thick plait alone escaping negligently behind, as though forgotten when the rest had been put up ; and this morning it was tied at the end with a large pink bow, which matched the trimmings of her dress.

Of her eyes I have already spoken ; they were the great feature of her face, and in right of them alone she might have claimed the title of a beauty—they were large, dark, and very expressive.

“I am going off on an excursion across the bay to the Morro Castle ; the young Duke you presented to me yesterday at the bull fight, has promised to take us and show us the lions of the place. Have you any engagement for this morning ?”

“Not that I know off,” I answered.

“Then I reckon you must just escort me to the Machina, where the rest are to meet me. I set out with my maid this morning, but I got tired of her, and sent her back to my hotel, the *Telégrafo*, so that I am alone ; and you must be my beau—that is, if you are not afraid.”

Of course I could not say *no*, so I replied that I should be delighted to escort her anywhere. She was very quick, however, as most American girls are, and noticed my disguised unwillingness.

“I calculate, Lord Carlton,” she said laughing, and without the least embarrassment, “that you

had some little spree on hand that you didn't like to acknowledge. You have lost it now, I guess ; and it serves you right, for not saying at once that you had an engagement. I am generous though, I'll let you off ; I don't want to make a Britisher beau me about against his will, especially as I have six other beaux waiting for me not half a mile from this hotel."

"Miss de Fison, you mistake me," I cried, anxious to explain that I had no objection to escorting her, and only that I had thought the request singular as coming from a young lady.

"That's all right," she said, stopping me short. "I'll take you at your word."

Whilst I went to get my hat, she arose and looked in one of the glasses at those eyes, whose power needed not to be enhanced by the dexterous touches of *rouge et noir* ; at that long, glossy hair, and shapely neck and figure, as a sportsman examines the locks and barrels of the weapon on which he depends for his success in the chase. The review proved satisfactory, I suppose, for when I came out of my room I found her looking more fascinating than ever, and with a graceful movement she took my arm, and we descended the staircase.

At the hotel door we found her volante, in which we were soon seated side by side, and in earnest conversation.

I found out that she prided herself on her

unconventionality and freedom from all the trammels of old-fashioned custom. She loved her father very much, but preferred to go about with young people, in which she was not singular, as the natural absence of all restraint, or surveillance, forms the great and distinguishing feature of American society.

"You English are so surrounded by social humbugs," she said, in the course of conversation, with a sweet smile and a blush that I believe she could summon at command. Indeed, this weapon had done more execution than all the rest of her artillery put together, and ruined more men than even *rouge et noir*. "I wonder it never strikes your women that all the care, and watching, and talk that goes on in poor old Europe about what girls may or may not do, is a covert insult; as if women across the water had neither power nor discretion to take care of themselves. Oh my! I guess *we* are none the worse for knowing how to keep out of harm's way, without any chaperones to help us, and to look after us."

As she said this, I could not help considering in my own mind whether, if all American girls were as pretty and self-reliant as this one, independence could have such a deteriorating effect upon women, as our old-world prejudices supposed. I do not think, however, that I answered her, for soon afterwards we arrived at the *Machina*, and we had to get out of the *volante*.

II.

“Preguntábale á un hijuelo
Una madre ; fulanico,
Qué quieres, huevo o' torrezno ?
Y él dijo ; torrezno madre ;
Pero échele encima el huevo ;
No es malo que haya de todo.”

CALDERON.

THE Machina, as I have before stated, is the wharf used by the men-of-war. In the Calle de Ricla are situated the General Post Office and the Comandancia de la Marina, or the quarters of the commanding officer of the marines, with the marine sentries on guard at the door. Between these two immense buildings there is a narrow street covered over by a stone archway ; this is the entrance to the Machina.

The first thing that meets the eye, as you enter by that archway, is a very tall and complicated machine which is used for placing the masts on the men-of-war, and which gives the name to the quay. Beside this there is a tiny little garden planted with miniature walks, shrubberies, and beautiful flowers, with a fountain in the centre containing gold and silver fish, and surrounded by an iron railing, but the whole not larger than

a small parlour. The rest of the wharf is paved with large marble slabs.

But the great charm of the Machina is its beautiful views in all directions, as it commands the bay, and the handsome paseos and boulevards which surround it ; as well as the sea-walls and the pretty villages of Regla and Casa Blanca on the opposite shore ; to which innumerable ferry-steamers, built after the pattern of the Hudson river steamers, and which look indeed like small "*floating palaces*," cross every five minutes.

Here we were met by Mr de Fison—who looked more convivial and good-humoured than ever in his tropical costume—and accompanied by no less than six men, mostly Yankees, whom Miss de Fison classified as "My beaux."

Foremost amongst them I must mention Mr Horace Ulysses Talboys—the same who had appeared on board the "City of Havana" before we left the frozen bay of New York, in the cool costume which he had thought necessary for a trip to the Tropics. He now wore the same white linen suit, and the same Panama hat, but he did not look quite so foolish as he did then, nor did he shiver and blow his hands so much.

He was quite a character, I afterwards discovered, this Horace Ulysses Talboys ; he was tall, and possessed what he thought a Byronic countenance, although I must confess I never saw the likeness ; he had dark hair and moustache, a very

pale complexion, and blue eyes. If there can be such a thing as a *limp* young man, this was one. There was a limpid shine on his colourless, white face, and an overflow of water in his pale blue eyes. He wore his dark locks painfully brushed up, evidently with the intention of giving to his forehead a height somewhat more in proportion to his intellect, for he was a youth of genius. He had been plucked at Harvard University a few years before, entirely owing to his overpowering talents ; at least, I have been told that soon afterwards he published, at his own expense, a volume of poems which were much admired by the young ladies of his acquaintance, whose Christian names headed each effusion of his poetic brain.

He was, further, distinguished from the common run of Americans—or, indeed, of men in general—by a perpetual blinking of the eyes and shaking of the head, and by a most affected lisp, which he considered most romantic and Byronic.

Near him stood another man, whom I recognised directly as another of our fellow-passengers on board the “City of Havana.” He was a person of much less marked characteristics ; he had never published any poems ; he could not even have been plucked at a university, for he had never been to one, having entered his father’s dry goods’ store in Broadway early in life ; but he was now a very rich man, and therefore by no means to be despised, in spite of his rather neglected education.

Near Mr de Fison stood young Mr Alexis, the well-known proprietor of the *New York Crier*—Gordon Alexis—another of the passengers on board the steamer—and the last; for the other three were unknown to me, until Miss de Fison introduced them respectively as—Mr Smith of England; Mr Rouget of France; and Mr Jepherson of Philadelphia, another Yankee with the most mellifluous voice and the readiest of tongues.

When we arrived, Mr Talboys was busily engaged in feeding a little flamingo which ran about the *Machina*, and seemed everybody's pet. An extraordinary-looking bird of a delicate pink colour, with an exceedingly long neck, which he twisted round and round in the most ridiculous manner. Running under its long bony legs, and flying over its fat little body, were about a dozen doves.

“Ah, Mith de Fithon!” burst forth the Byronic youth when we approached him, “do admire thith beautiful bird and thethe little dovths—are they not pretty?—don't they make you thy? and with you were almoth one of them? Ah! hark! methinkth I hear their thweet coo—ah! how thweet it ith!”

I cannot guess how much more “sentiment” he would have lisped, if Miss de Fison had not stopped him short by saying, in a very sharp tone,—

“Nonsense! flamingoes are stupid, sentimental, nonsensical birds; and as for the doves, their

cooing may be most poetical, doubtless, but is not at all to my taste. Father," she added in the same breath, "has the Duke not made his appearance yet?"

"No, my dear," he answered; "but if I am not very much mistaken, here he is in the Captain-General's barge."

A large steam-barge now glided softly over the ever-glinting waters of the bay, and drew close to the wharf; the Duke de Miranda sprang ashore with much agility the moment it touched the side.

"Here I am," he said in English; "I have had a little difficulty about obtaining de pass for us to visit de Castle to-day, but all is right now. Shall we start, Mademoiselle?"

"Oh my! that is right, my charming Duke," said the New York belle, taking his arm and gracefully stepping into the barge. "You are most gallant; but I must tell you that you will have to look around pretty smart to come up to what Lord Carlton has told me of you."

She had the power of making the most stupid remark sound eloquent by a sweet smile which displayed her pretty teeth, so that the young Duke was flattered, and charmed with this little speech, and pressed her tiny gloved hand between his equally small ones, while he handed her into the silk-covered cabin at the stern of the steamer, where they were left alone; the other beaux, to-

gether with her good-natured Father and myself, remaining outside the cabin, apparently lost in admiration of the bay, over which we swiftly glided towards the rugged rocks upon which rose the Morro Castle.

III.

“Hast thou seen that lordly castle,
That castle by the sea?
Golden and red above it
The flag floats gorgeously.”

LONGFELLOW.

WE landed at the foot of the steep slope which leads to the main gate of the fortress. Even from here one is compelled to admire the great strength of the Morro Castle; on either side of us there is a high stone parapet, and below us, almost on a line with the water, begin already the batteries. Over us rise twelve immense cannons mounted on siege carriages; these are the famous twelve Apostles, that day and night keep watch over the Havana.

And yet this monstrous pile has nothing grim or frowning about it; the stones of which the Morro is built have with age acquired a remarkably dazzling whiteness, which contrasts admirably with the dark rocks upon which it is raised. Over its steep and well-fortified walls rises the lighthouse, a graceful and elegant tower, which resembles a doric column in its chaste and classical proportions. The light is revolving, and of the very first order. It is seen at sea from a distance of twenty miles, and points out the haven

which draws so many ambitious hearts to cross the broad Atlantic.

Near this lighthouse, upon a broad castellated tower, the walls of which are twelve feet thick, stand the lofty masts sustaining the countless flags which signal the ships in sight. How many anxious eyes are fixed every day on these masts from the bright town below.

But above them all rises the glorious banner of Castille and Aragon, the first flag that crossed the mighty ocean, the flag hoisted there by Christopher Columbus. Long may it wave under that matchless sky ! Long may it wave over that lordly castle ! Long may it wave, and may the men below it learn to look upon those stripes of red and gold with enthusiasm and love !

In the reign of Philip the Second the question first arose of building fortifications in the new Spanish empire of the west ; but the proud king despised the precaution ; such was the conviction he entertained of his own power. In the year 1528, however, the buccaneers, composed mainly of English and Dutch pirates, attacked and captured Havana, and set fire to it, reducing the new town to ashes. The governor, the famous Don Fernando de Soto, rebuilt the town, and erected the fort of La Fuerza, a fort which inspired dread even to the great Drake, who was obliged in 1585 to withdraw, after a short siege.

Four years later Philip ordered two castles to

be built for the protection of this already important town. These were the Balaria de la Punta, and the Castillo de los Tres Reyes del Morro, which the celebrated engineer, Antonelli, soon erected with gold derived from the Spanish empire of Mexico. Thus the port of the Havana, already the most beautiful of America, became also the most important and the strongest. The older fortress of La Fuerza remained almost abandoned, and was re-christened Fuerza Vieja.

In 1762 Sir George Pickcock and the Duke of Albemarle appeared off the walls of the Morro Castle with a fleet of two hundred vessels and an English army of fourteen thousand men. The place was unprepared to resist such an invasion, yet the Morro Castle made a long and obstinate defence, and it was only by stratagem, and, as robbers glide through a gate ajar, during the sleep of the porter, that the English managed to enter the long-coveted harbour.

After a fruitless bombardment, which had lasted several weeks, the English suddenly stopped firing. But they had not renounced the enterprise, as the peaceful inhabitants of the besieged city believed; they had only changed their plans of attack. Seeing that they could not carry the place by force, they now took to stratagem. The English admiral knew that during the heat of mid-day all the population, even the garrison, succumbed to the sweet slumbers of a *siesta*, so

necessary under the perpendicular rays of a tropical sun. The 30th of July, at noon, while the Spanish garrison slept, the English fleet entered the bay without firing one shot, without waking a single sentinel.

But even with the enemy inside the bay the Havana offered an obstinate resistance, and only capitulated on the 14th of the following August.

The English had control of the city for a year, only retaining possession, however, of the coast from Mariel to Matanzas, but they could not keep it long, and on the 10th of February 1763 they restored the Island to Spain.

Need I add that from that day the Spanish sentinels have watched day and night over the precious city !

The bay of Havana, I have already repeated several times, is the most beautiful in the world ; it is formed by a semi-circular basin, capable of containing a thousand men-of-war or more, and is only accessible by a very narrow channel through which the furious waves of the Atlantic do not penetrate, and guarded on either side by powerful castles. These are so near that the sentinels can speak to each other across the water.

The Castles of the Morro and the Punta command the entrance of the bay, opposite is the fortress of the Cabañas, with guns pointing in every direction, and at the end of its grand sweep is the fortress of Santo Domingo de Atares, which

commands the entire bay, and holds the city itself under surveillance. On the land side rise the Castles del Principe, San Lazaro, and Pastora, the tower of Chorrera, and a great many more forts and batteries, which, with its strong stone walls and countless ships of war, make the metropolis of the Antilles an impregnable city.

But the Castillo del Morro, at the foot of which we had now landed, is by far the most important of all. I will not attempt to describe it ; there is so little charm in reading about impregnable fortresses, castellated walls, colossal guns, and countless soldiers, that I will gladly spare the tedious details to my readers, who I am sure have had already quite enough of my descriptions, which must read very much like a guide-book, and are no doubt anxious to know the subsequent conduct and speeches of the fascinating American belle, and of the young grandee of Spain.

But unfortunately I am writing an autobiography, not a novel, and cannot possibly repeat conversations I never heard ; for the youthful pair kept always at a certain distance from the rest of the party, whilst the other admirers of the irresistible *belle Américaine* looked on from a respectful distance, with the awkward air of actors who have no idea of by-play, and consequently wish themselves off a stage on which they feel they are only playing secondary parts.

And *par exemple*, "Don't we wish ourselves a

thousand miles away from the Morro Castle in spite of its "charming battlements and delightful guns,—that's all!" said one of the "beaux."

"I gueth I do not find thith too amuthing," lisped Mr Talboys, as we examined the wide moat, which is a dry and very deep one. "Mith de Fithon ith falling very much in my ethtimathion, I can tell you."

"Do you think she has invited us to accompany her here with the sole intention of showing us how little she cares for us?" said another. "I expect she is setting her cap at the Duke, and d—— it, Sir, she is doing it with a vengeance," burst out Mr Smith of England, while the Frenchman shook his head, and muttered between his teeth—"O tempora! O mores!"

But *I* could not blame them for this flirtation, however tantalising it was for us poor lookers-on. It is so natural for an American girl to flirt with a handsome nobleman! And he—he, of course, finds it his duty to cut out that little band of Yankee admirers. For what idle young man can resist the temptation of attempting the conquest of a fascinating little woman, and the annihilation of half-a-dozen men older and wiser than himself, and especially when the pretty little woman is a *belle Américaine*, who gives one all the encouragement possible, and looks so *piquante*, and says such startling and pretty little things.

As for Wilhelmina de Fison, there is no fear

for her. Bountiful nature, who has endowed her with such a lithe, graceful figure, and with such a bright, careless smile, has also given her a light, buoyant spirit, which, though it enables her to fascinate every one about her, is at the same time a sure safeguard from any strong emotion; as if she had provided in this way against the possibility of the beauty of her pretty spoilt child from being destroyed by vehement passions, which are so ruinous to bright eyes and fair complexions.

American girls are no more women of pleasure than they are women of business; though with them pleasure is business, and business is pleasure. Besides the physical advantages they naturally possess, they have the great advantage over our women, of a sound, calculating head, a cold, resolute, go-a-head spirit, an abundance of common sense and nerve; no sentiment, and but little romantic tendencies; no wonder, therefore, that their admirers should be more enthusiastic about them than about any other women possessing twice their beauty and thrice their soul. *La belle Américaine* has the power of managing that strange compound of vanity, recklessness, and warm affections which constitutes a man's heart; and she takes a great delight in playing on an instrument of which she has already sounded all the chords, and awakened all the tones, till she knows it thoroughly, and values it accordingly—that is to say—holds it only at its real worth—

at its latest quotation in Society's Stock Exchange.

Let them flirt away, therefore, and make the old walls of the Morro Castle ring with their cheerful, silvery laughter, which *seems* to come straight from their youthful hearts, for there can be no doubt after all, that such "frivolities" and "nonsensical pastimes" help to oil the wheels of life,—of life which we are inclined, in a general way, to make too much "matter-of-fact," and take too much "*au sérieux*."

IV.

“ Most glorious orb ! that wert a worship, ere
The mystery of thy making was reveal’d !
Thou earliest minister of the Almighty
Which gladden’d on their mountain tops, the hearts
Of the Chaldean shepherds, till they pour’d
Themselves in orisons ! Thou material god !
And representative of the Unknown—
Who chose thee for his shadow ! Thou chief star !
Centre of many stars ! which mak’st our earth
Endurable, and temperest the hues
And hearts of all who walk within thy rays !
Sire of the seasons ! Monarch of the climes,
And those who dwell in them ! for near or far,
Our inborn spirits have a tint of thee,
Even as our outward aspects ; thou dost rise,
And shine, and set in glory. Fare thee well ! ”

LORD BYRON.

WHEN we had inspected all the different batteries and towers of the Morro Castle, we proceeded by a stone-covered gallery, which is over one hundred yards long, and is arched and lighted by long narrow apertures, to the fortifications of the Cabañas, which are situated on the brow of the hill, and are the largest in the island, and said to be amongst the best in the world.

Like the Morro Castle, they are entirely built of white stone and concrete, which age has considerably whitened ; they are about eight hun-

dred English yards long, and have accommodation for more than 5000 men, the capacity for cannon being, as the captain on guard told us, unlimited. It is strange what an intense interest Miss de Fison took in all these things, and what a time she lingered with the Duke over the colossal siege guns that lined the walls!

We dined in the barracks with the commanding officer, who gave us a splendid dinner; although he assured us several times that he was quite unprepared to receive us, but that he could not exert himself too much for the Duke de Miranda and his friends.

The barracks are large and substantial stone edifices, and the room in which we dined was capacious and tastefully decorated; although with white walls and cane chairs in the plain but elegant Cuban style.

After dinner we sallied forth once more upon the walls, where coffee and cigars were served to us. Miss de Fison was overpoweringly bright, and her good-natured father was more jovial and convivial than ever; but their laughter and jokes seemed to me a sacrilege, the panorama before us was so soul-stirring and glorious.

The Fort faces the city, the numerous towers and domes of which now shone in the evening twilight, illuminated by the last rays of the setting sun. To describe that scene would have been impossible, the thousand different hues of

the sky, and the many reflections it produced upon the waters below, would alone have required a Claude Loraine or a Turner to reproduce; and it would surpass the powers of the most experienced pen to do justice to the description of the countless varieties of life which peopled the scene, giving a soul to this beautiful frame.

By one of those wonderful arrangements of nature, which, after all (being accounted for on natural principles), would be far more wonderful did they not exist, this privileged country is always refreshed by the gentle land and sea breezes which succeed each other regularly during the twenty-four hours; the refreshing winds from the Atlantic cooling the heat of the day, and the warmer and more aromatic air from the interior warming the cooler hours of the night, thus rendering the climate of this enchanted isle always equal, always invigorating, always the same delicious temperature, night and day, winter and summer.

But now the sun was going down, and the gay population of the Havana sallying forth, with its last rays, to enjoy the refreshing breeze from the sea, ere it ceased for the night.

Opposite the battery on which we stood, lay the fair city, like some voluptuous daughter of the prophet, enveloped in her royal robes of green. Around her were stretched the strong and frowning walls against which the rippling

waters sparkled like precious stones, but over these walls we could see the beautiful gardens or *paseos*, planted with Indian laurels, ceibas, orange trees, and palms, under whose inviting shade were grouped people from all nations and climates, from the fair-complexioned Saxon to the black-skinned negro, from the yellow-faced Celestial to the go-ahead intellectual-looking Yankee, there they all were grouped, in countless and picturesque profusion; whilst behind them rose abruptly the many-coloured roofs and spires of houses, palaces, and churches, piled up in close proximity; and in the centre, fresh and green like an oasis in the desert of stone houses, the small but pretty Plaza de Armas, looking always so invitingly cool under the shadow of its luxuriant Indian laurels. And on the land side, behind the city walls, which were marked out by the long regular rows of green trees that encircle the city like the Ring at Vienna, lay stretched in every direction the new town, with its marble palaces, and handsome theatres, whilst behind, in the dim distance, rose the Castillo del Principe, like a grim eunuch watching over the priceless sultana.

But all these avenues, paseos, squares, and boulevards were crowded with people, even the tops of the houses seemed alive, whilst the sparkling waters of the bay were anything but a "silent highway." Graceful barges, rowed by the picturesquely clad slaves, shoot out in all

directions from behind vessels of every rig and every tonnage ; the always-active ferry-steamers cross the wide expanse of water in its entire extent. The curiously shaped gondolas and boats of the *guajiros* and *fruteros*, laden with the golden fruits of their little gardens, outside the city, are also to be seen hovering around the great steamers just arrived from Cadiz and Liverpool. All is bustle, movement, noise, life. The tiles on the tops of the houses glitter in the last rays of the setting sun, the rippling waves glint as they reflect the brilliantly coloured sky ; all is as beautiful, and bright, and as dazzling as it can be, and yet—what is it that gives to this beautiful scene a tinge of melancholy ?

The gay conversation of Miss de Fison and the young Duke only serves to increase this unaccountable dullness. I quit their side, unobserved, I proceed to another part of the fortress, to the highest battery, and from thence I watch in silent admiration the progress of the glorious orb of day as it sinks behind the horizon, amidst clouds of gold and crimson.

This is the mystery of the strange air of melancholy which pervades the bright and gay scene before me. The sun is setting, night is advancing, and soon all this glorious beauty must fade to give place to the dark shades of night. This is the mystery, it is the feeling that we have that all these beauties we so admire must fade

and disappear, that gives to all sunsets this tinge of melancholy. I do not know if others experience the same sensations that I do. I suppose they do not, for we are not two alike ; but to me there is always something depressing and sad in the setting of the sun, in the thought that another day is added to the long list of “ days that are dead ;” and that my past is growing larger and larger with every pulsation of my beating heart. Another day added to the past ! And yet, what is that to me ? Is my future one day the shorter ? Is not a whole eternity still mine ? A day that is dead ! Dead ? But can it be *dead* when it is mine to recall to mind at my will ? The day that is dead has for me at least a more tangible, a more vivid identity than the day that exists. We live as much in the past as we do in the present, nay even more so, for the present is as nought, a mere instant of time, one insignificant grain in the hour-glass of time, whilst the past and the future are eternities, whole eternities that are ours to command.

As these ideas passed through my troubled brain, and I looked up and saw the star of day, that mighty sun which alone marks the time, and the succession of days and nights for us immortal beings—I could not but exclaim—

“ *Salve*, O glorious orb of day—thou art the monarch of this colossal system ; planets and satellites and comets are thy slaves ; thou art the

mighty hand that holds our earth in space. Oh, Sun, I salute thee !

“I salute thee before thou goest to light another hemisphere and leave us amidst the shades of night. But one word, O Sun, before thy silver sister supplants thee in the sky. O would that I could find words to express *that* which I feel in me !

“Thou art the heart of this immense organisation, and thy eternal pulsations alone prolong its existence. Without thee a perpetual night would reign throughout the earth, bare and fruitless would its fields become, cold and miserable its climes, and we—we its inhabitants who with so much arrogance appropriate to ourselves the vain title of ‘Lords of the Creation’—we, immortal though we be, without thee could not exist. O, mighty Sun, *Salve !*

“Thou balancest the earth in space, sustaining it by the invisible cords of planetary attraction ; thou directest her course and markest her years and her seasons. Thou weavest the new mantle of tender green Spring ; thou coverest our meadows with flowers ; thou fillest our woods with song ; thou ripenest the corn’s golden ear ; thou producest the fruits and gildest the crops. As thou risest amidst the gray clouds of the cool morning thou givest life to the hemisphere through which thy priceless rays begin to spread, and at eve, when, midst purple and gold, thou

quittest the lovely prairies, thou coolest the transparent atmosphere, and transformest it into the crystal drops of a blessed dew which fertilises the plants and satisfies their thirst. Thou formest the various winds in space, the balmy, aromatic breeze of the evening, and the breathing, life-giving air of the morning ; thou producest the life-sustaining fluids which we breathe and causest the circulation of life throughout organic matter ; to thee also we owe the fuel which is the basis of our industries ; the electric spark which unites the Continents, and even the rays which thou didst shed upon this earth a million years ago ere man walked upon it, produce to-day the steam which enables us to cross this mighty waste of waters ; for never did, and never shall, one of thy beams shine in vain. During many many ages didst thou cast forth upon this very earth thy radiant sunbeams, but no man existed then to behold thy glory ; trees of ferns, and forests of grass, alone received them, but nothing is lost or wasted in this great order of existence. Those sunbeams did not shine in vain ; imprisoned in a deep and dark tomb they have slept undisturbed for ages, but nothing dies which does not at last see resurrection ; those rays need only to be dug up again from the bosom of Mother Earth to start afresh into active life ; for, thanks to thee, O Sun, those primitive plants lived and died and underwent certain changes which have

turned them into coal—yes, coal ; those sunbeams are burnt by the men of to-day in the form of coal, and though their resurrection-life is but a dim shadow of their former brightness, they are sunbeams yet.

“Thou art the lord of light and the lord of darkness, the lord of day and the lord of night, the welcomed star of summer and the beloved fire-side of winter ; for we have nothing to warm us but thy precious rays in summer or winter, think or talk as we like. The fire on our hearths, the gas in our streets, the oil in our lamps, the candles on our tables, are all produced by thee. We kindle them, and thus we raise thy dead sunbeams from their grave and send them forth to run a longer cycle of changes ere they rest anew in peace. O mighty Sun, only dispenser of heat and light throughout the world ; thou art the sole centre—the soul of our system—the lamp that lights it—the fire that heats it—the magnet that guides and controls it, and the face of nature shines, and life smiles where thou, O mighty orb ! dost cast thy rays.

“To thee we owe all this, and more—the activity of our minds, the origin of our ideas. It was thou, O Sun, who did'st teach the Egyptian of old to measure time and to raise his ponderous pyramids ; it was thou, O Sun, who did'st teach the old Persians their philosophy and their arts ; it was thou, O Sun, who did'st inspire the

Hebrew prophets and the Greek poets; it is thou, O Sun, who, with thy long-hidden rays of the past, dost move our vessels to-day, carry our goods, transport our messages, paint our portraits, light our churches. What imagination would be powerful enough to calculate all the benefits we derive from thee, O Sun.

“I marvel not that the old Chaldeans in mute adoration, should have bowed the knee, and poured their prayers and their woes before thee in mingled awe and love. I marvel not that *they* in their ignorance mistook thee for the God of all creation, for like a god thou art, and the fittest image of the Creator which even *we* can ever hope to behold. Like Him, thou art powerful and great; like Him, thou art a life-giver and a life-restorer; like Him, thou art the source of all light; like Him, thou art immense and pure; but thou art only an image after all; thou changest, God does not; thy purity, like thy greatness, is only relative. God is above all comparisons. He knows no change; he knows no variations nor shadow of turning—thou art but an image after all, O Sun!

“But grand and glorious as thou art; man has weighed thee, and even measured thy size inch by inch; that powerless creature, to whom thou givest life and light, has been able to discover of what thou art composed by the very rays which thou so bountifully bestowest upon him! But what is

thy nature; is there life in thee? We know not. Art thou, the giver of life, a lifeless corpse? Impossible! And yet, if there were men on thy glorious surface, men even as we are, they would have fallen into shapeless cinders long ago. Yet why should *we* limit the powers of God to the few specimens of organic existence with which we are acquainted? Is it possible that in this boundless universe, this miserable little planet, which depends upon thee for everything, should be the standard of all creation? Who can tell? A mystery surrounds thee like a crown of glory; we cannot comprehend worlds so far above our own, but in thy grand mysterious majesty we cannot but admire thee.

“To think that thou, oh star! which seemest so small from this earth that the wise philosophers of ancient Athena compared thee in size to the Peloponnesus, should be one million and a-half times the size of this little earth, which, in our blind ignorance, we believe the only inhabited one in the universe! To think that it would require three hundred and fifty thousand earths like ours to counterbalance thee! And even then to think that there exist in this wondrous universe thousands of suns grander and brighter than thou, rulers of systems, to which thou bearest the same resemblance as that pale diminutive satellite of ours bears to thee!

“The eternity of the celestial movements, the

thought that these movements of satellites round planets, of planets round suns, of suns in the countless midst of starry nebulae, will never stop ; give to the human soul the highest, the fittest idea of the immensity and activity in the bosom of which we shall for ever dwell.

“ The earth revolves incessantly round the sun, and the sun itself travels through space, carrying with him the earth and all the other planets with a velocity of one hundred and seventy thousand leagues per day. We are thus eternally travelling through space. Since the world existed, it has never been twice in the same spot of the universe ; and it will never revisit the point in which it to-day revolves. In a few hours we shall be hundreds of miles away—away in space ; in one year, millions of miles away ; after a century of eternal journeying, quintillions of miles away ; but shall we *even then* be any nearer the confines of space ?

“ And thou, oh sun ! and thou, oh king of light, thou art only, after all, a small insignificant star, one of the smallest of that nebula of silver which we call the Milky-Way ! Before the contemplation of this great truth, and of the immensity of space, what becomes of the numberless worlds that fill its boundless extent, and the immutable laws which govern their movements ? What becomes, before these incontestable truths, of the ancient ideas of a creation made expressly for man, the

fond illusion that all these countless suns were created only to give light to this little planet?

“Oh sun! thy nature is an argument which proves a God! fare-thee-well—fare-thee-well—for ’tis revolution all; all is change, and we must part; I cannot stop the earth’s eastward march; I cannot stop the planet in its rotation round its sun. Day is o’er, night is come, and, like death, darkness spreads over the fields which thy rays have tinted this day with so many bright hues.

“Thus must we all depart, some sooner, others later; all must go like thou, oh sun! all must quit the fair earth—but day follows night. To-morrow, amidst the glowing splendour of a morning sky, thou wilt again appear upon this very spot and fill it with a flood of life; but so shall we. Thou givest us the example; thou appearest to exist in an ocean of darkness, but thou risest at the same instant in another hemisphere; the ruins of a city fall, but they serve to form more magnificent structures; an empire expires, but new ones rise like the phoenix from its ashes. Look nature through—men of little faith—’tis revolution all, all change, all change, but no death. All to reflower must fade, all to be reborn must die. Oh, orb of day! thou goest, but only to come again to-morrow in greater glory.”

Then Tennyson’s famous verses came to my mind, and applying them to the sun,

I exclaimed, "the sun is going, let him go ; let the old go, let the new come ; oh, sun, take with thee hence all the imperfections of our earthly nature, the faithlessness, coldness, emptiness, and ignorance of the past; the slander, the spite, the all-absorbing thirst for gold, the emptiness of modern science, the bigotry of blind, senseless faith, the bloody wars of ambition, the false pride and still falser hearts, the sin, the want, the care, and all the miseries of old. Begone, oh sun, take all this hence—away with thee ! But come in the purer, newer light of to-morrow, and bring with thee a full redress of all these wrongs—bring a nobler form of life, a love for all ; and justice that will hold good for rich and poor, a science that will discover and search ; a divine faith that will know no doubts ; bring with thee peace and joy to all mankind, bring with thee progress and love. But away with the old, away with the false ; bring in the true.

"Oh sun, thou expirest but only to rise again to-morrow ; emblem of man who passes from the earth but only to return, who disappears, not expires. Great sun, fare-thee-well ?"

Carried on by my poetical reverie I had looked at the blazing sun until I could see nothing else around me, for the sun of the tropics is blinding even in its decline. Suddenly the thunder of a cannon very near me, awoke me to reality. It was the sun-down gun of the Morro, which announced

the end of the day, after which no ships are allowed to come in or go out of the harbour. I looked up and saw that the orb of day had sunk out of sight beneath the horizon, which was still all a-glow with its last reflections ; lighting up the airy clouds which the land breeze, already commencing, caused to assume the fantastic forms of mountains, castles, cliffs, and hills ; but the dark veil of night was already closing fast upon the scene, for in this country there is no twilight, and whilst the sun disappears in a magnificent array of golden clouds, night spreads over the zenith its canopy of sapphires spotted with diamonds.

I arose, and with a reluctant step returned to the lower battery, where I had left my friends. But on arriving there I found the place deserted, and the table with the empty coffee cups and surrounding chairs alone remaining to remind me of Miss de Fison and her numerous admirers.

Upon inquiry I found that not long since, and after having looked for me in all impossible places, they had re-embarked in the captain-general's steam barge (which he had kindly lent the Duke for the pic-nic), and had returned to the Havana, as they were in a hurry to go to the French theatre. The presiding officer was exceedingly sorry that this should have happened, he could not express his despair, his indignation knew no bounds—but he could not help it—they had gone, leaving me behind.

All that now remained for me to do was to hire a boat and return also to the town, which I did forthwith ; the sail across the beautiful bay was delightful, the strange phosphorescence of the water glittering with subdued beauty, now that the sun had vanished—and I was not sorry to have missed the society of the captive duke and the captivating Miss de Fison.

When we were about half way across the bay, the boatman enquired where I wanted to land.

“At the Hotel St Carlos,” I answered, and I added to myself, “Now for thy angelic visit, my Conchita !”

NIGHT THE TENTH.

“’Tis alone of His appointing,
That thy feet on thorns have trod ;
Suffering, woe, renunciation,
Only bring us nearer God.”

MARY HOWITT.

I.

“ Beautiful spirit! with thy hair of light,
And dazzling eyes of glory, in whose form
The charms of earth's last mortal daughter grow
To an unearthly stature, in an essence
Of purer elements; while the hues of youth,—
Carnations like a sleeping infant's cheek,
Rock'd by the beating of her mother's heart,
Or the rose tints, which summer's twilight leaves
Upon the lofty glacier's virgin snow,
The blush of earth, embracing with her heaven,
Tinge thy celestial aspect and make tame
The beauties of the rainbow which bends o'er thee.
Beautiful spirit! in thy calm clear brow,
Wherein is glass'd serenity of soul,
Which of itself shows immortality,
I read that thou wilt pardon to a Son
Of Earth, whom the abstruser powers permit
At times to commune with them—if that he
Avail him of his spells—to call thee thus,
And gaze on thee a moment.”

LORD BYRON.

AN hour later I was seated in my balcony overlooking the peaceful bay, now illuminated with the silver rays of the moon, as ever and anon she appeared behind the transparent clouds which but a short time before had been gilded with the sun's brightest rays.

There I sat alone deep in thought, with my eyes fixed upon that fair star from whence my

angel wife came so often to visit me once more on earth.

Her nocturnal visits had now become almost necessary to me, I seemed to live but in her company, and the long long hours which I was obliged to spend alone were for me blank hours, during which I felt as in a dream, a stranger to all around me.

“Oh Conchita mia!” I exclaimed. “Come to me once more, come and tell me all about our past, all about that strange past which I now feel only too thankful to have forgotten, that I may hear it from thy lips.”

And yet the mere thought of it makes me shudder. Can it be possible that I should have ever preferred another to thee? Can it be possible that I should have behaved so unmercifully to thee, my sweet angel? Ah, me? What a past that of ours has been, what trials have we undergone, and all for what? But no, I would rather believe that I had been your bitter enemy, than that, being your lover, I should have deserted you.

“But all that misery which we have both undergone, all the suffering and the pain, were they indeed so necessary for our future welfare, for our present happiness?”

As I pronounced these words I felt upon my brow the cool pressure of the spirit lips, which sent such a thrill of pleasure through my system, and

which I knew so well. I looked up, and there before me stood my angel wife, looking more like Murillo's picture of the Conception than ever, as she bent over me in her transparent mantle of azure and white, her golden locks forming an aureola of glory around her head, whilst her deep violet eyes looked on me as if from another world.

II.

“Sad was thy lot on mortal stage!
The captive thrush may brook the cage,
The prison'd eagle dies for rage,
Brave spirit, do not scorn my strain!”

SIR W. SCOTT.

Walter. “At last, my Conchita, thou comest to me; at last, oh, my angel, thou returnest to my side. Ah, if thou didst but know how vain and empty all the joys of the world now seem to me!

“As I watched the glorious sun sinking below the horizon not many hours ago, a dreadful fear came over me, I felt, I cannot tell thee why, as if I should never see thee again; for have I not seen thee fade and die, like the setting sun? But night again restores thee to my arms, as the morn will restore the light of the sun to sorrowing earth.

“Speak, my Conchita, I am so anxious to hear thy touching tale of woes long since forgotten, and of love never to be lost! Speak!”

Conchita. “All these trials which we both have gone through have been necessary for the present welfare of our spirits, believe me, dearest Walter, and without them we should not be so

happy to-day. It is God Himself who, in His supreme justice and wisdom, places trials and temptations in our way. Suffering, woe, renunciation, as the poet says, only bring us nearer to God, for through much tribulation we attain to His kingdom. The effects of trials and sufferings upon the human soul may be rightly compared to those of the plough on the surface of the earth ; it prepares and turns it from sterility to fecundity—from unproductive nakedness to priceless beauty. They are the goads that help us forward ; and if it were not for these occasional whips, that awake the but too often sluggish and lazy spirit, we should for ever remain slaves to our ignorance and to our lower instincts ; and, like the animals, content ourselves with eating during a whole eternity the coarse grass of the virgin prairies and the crab-apples of the forbidden tree. It is the wish to live better that has made man discover and cultivate the grain of corn, domesticate the animals, raise the hut, cultivate his intellect, discover electricity and steam. It is the desire of obtaining a higher state of spiritual existence that makes us progress, and, alas ! sometimes fail and sin ; but even sin is as good as a lesson to us, for we may fail twenty times in doing a certain thing ; but if we persevere in it, we shall most certainly succeed at last. And this is the reason why re-incarnation is necessary ; one earthly life could never be enough for us ; we never could gain, during its short

span, enough knowledge and experience to carry us on for an eternity of continued existence.

“Thus you see, dearest husband, that those trials we have had to bear in the past, were necessary and just; they were punishments for the sins of our past—probations for the happiness of our future.

“And now let me once more resume the frequently broken thread of this history of our past. Last night I left off, if my memory does not fail me, at the point when, as the proud but love-sick Doña Berenguela, I had written to you, then the Prince Recesvinto, telling you the news of Serena’s marriage to my brother, and asking you to come as soon as possible to our castle at Seville to judge for yourself of the love and fidelity she bore you.

“Days and weeks passed, and my anxiety was not relieved; no news, and yet no news, of my still beloved betrothed. ‘Had he received my message?’ ‘Had he been stopped on his way to me?’ were thoughts constantly in my mind, until one day when my brother, Don Fruela, entered my chamber, which I now seldom quitted except for that of my kind-hearted mother, and with an expression of unmistakable joy in his handsome countenance, he thus addressed me: ‘The day of my triumph is close at hand, Berenguela. Recesvinto has fallen into my power by the luckiest of accidents—he is my prisoner.’

“I trembled as I heard these words, and the

blood rushed violently to my head ; my worst fears were realised !

“ ‘ You seem moved, sister,’ he added, noticing the effect his words had had upon me ; ‘ did you write to him to come ? ’

“ I had not yet learned the value of truth ; so, to excuse myself before my brother, I said ‘ No ’ with as calm a voice as I could at that moment command.

“ I am glad you did not, for he would undoubtedly have taken it for a preconcerted plan, as it has turned out ; for, although his enemy and his rival, yet, I bear him no ill-will. Just imagine, my dear Berenguela, I had gone out with a few soldiers to inspect the outer fortifications which we are busily constructing all around the town, when I saw a man on horseback, who apparently had lost his way, galloping towards me. Without looking at me, he asked, hurriedly, which was Count Fruela’s castle. I recognised him immediately. It was Recesvinto, and a large body-guard followed him at a short distance. There was no time to be lost ; a moment’s hesitation would have endangered my life ; so I gave orders immediately to my followers to secure his person, and before he or his soldiers had recovered from their astonishment, I was galloping away towards the castle with the Prince as my prisoner, and he is now below in one of the safest dungeons below the waters of the river.’

“I thought I must have died when I heard this.

“‘Do you know what it means my having him a prisoner here, although he is the son of the King of Spain, and I only the Count of one of his numerous counties? It means the fall of his dynasty. Flavio Quindasvinto is now no longer king, and I am going to succeed him. The noble Goths are displeased with him, and have sworn to dethrone him, which we shall succeed in doing; as our father succeeded in dethroning the former king, Fulga, and placing Flavio on the throne. This very day you will see the magazines of the Boctis covered with soldiers, both Gothic and Spanish; for the Spaniards have at last hoisted the standard of revolt, and will come to my aid.’

“‘Mind that they and your Spanish Countess do not turn traitors.’

“‘Serena! Ah! no, she loves me too much; besides, my cause is the cause of Spain—my ruin would be hers—she is my wife! It is *you* I fear more than any other—*you*, for you still love Recesvinto.’

It was useless to deny the fact; if my lips had lied, my eyes would have betrayed me. I simply bowed my head, whilst hot tears—tears of rage and of love—commenced coursing down my burning cheeks. At this moment a page entered the chamber, and, bowing low before the Count, said in a hoarse voice, which betrayed his alarm,—

"The king is at this moment entering the city of Seville."

Both my brother and I started up. "What! the king, Flavio Quindasvinto? impossible, impossible!"

"Senoria," said the page, making another low bow, and putting on an additional coating of humility to disguise his fright. "He has come at the head of an army, and the governor of the city has been compelled to open the gates to him."

Here another page, even more alarmed than the first, entered hastily.

"Ah, my lord! the king of Spain is coming towards the castle."

"I fear nothing from this, it will only occasion a change in our plans, perhaps it will bring the climax sooner than we expected, but no harm to our cause can come from it;" after saying this the Count summoned the governor of the castle, and gave orders that the king should be received with all the honour due to his exalted position, he also sent messengers to the different chiefs of the conjuration, to tell them of the unlooked-for event, and to ask them to come immediately to his castle, with all the men they could muster. He then left my apartment and hurried to that of Serena to tell her the news.

A scornful smile played on her proud lips. "The lion is coming of his own free will to the trap,"

she said. "Poor king, he little expects what is awaiting him at Seville!"

"Do you think he knows that his son is here?" asked Don Fruela, who was now beginning to feel uneasy as to the course events would take after this unexpected arrival, which naturally necessitated an alteration of all their plans. "Do you think he knows that his son is here? I hear he is advancing at the head of an army."

"Yes, but he will not bring his soldiers into your castle; he comes as a friend, we shall receive him as a friend, he will not dare to bring an armed force into your house; and once we have him in our power it will be our fault if he leave the place alive."

"You are daring!"

"And hopeful."

"You are brave!"

"I want you to be king. Do you think you will have courage enough to ascend the throne?"

And the beautiful temptress smiled at him with her usual half-scornful, half-encouraging air, which could arouse him to anything.

"I will dare everything for you, my Serena! my queen!"

And Don Fruela threw his arms around her. As he lent over to kiss that lovely mouth? a word fell from it on his ear, as if by chance, a single word, but a word which made him tremble, as he once more drew himself to his full height.

That word was "poison." He looked at her but could not believe that it was she who had uttered it, and there she stood in front of him, her proud lips to all outward appearance innocent of any such dreadful words, while her handsome head thrown a little backward, gave her an expression of command that could not fail to impress him.

For some minutes they stood opposite each other, looking into each other's eyes, trying to read each other's thoughts.

Serena was the first to speak, but her deep mellow voice, which always thrilled him as the sound of rippling water thrills the thirsty traveller, only opened to pronounce two more words—

"You understand."

I know not if she meant this as a question, for she used no emphasis to make her meaning any clearer, but he took it as such, and answered in a broken voice, as if trying to conceal his deep emotion from her who seemed so calm and self-possessed. "Yes, I understand thee." . . .

And he left the chamber, but no sooner had the last fold of his velvet mantle vanished behind the tapestry-covered doorway, than this proud woman, this apparently insensible Delilah, threw herself on the ground and burst into sobs and tears.

What were her feelings at that moment? Were

those tears which seemed so unnatural, and so out of place on her proud, pale cheek, prompted by remorse ? by love ? by rage ? by what ?

Only God, who sees what passes in all hearts, could tell.

III.

Macb. Duncan comes here to-night.

Lady. And when goes hence?

Macb. To-morrow, as he purposes.

Lady. O, never

Shall sun that morrow see!

Your face, my thane, is a book, where men

May read strange matters—to beguile the time

Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,

Your hand, your tongue: Look like the innocent flower,

But be the serpent under it. He that's coming

Must be provided for; and you shall put

This night's great business into such dispatch;

Which shall to all our nights and days to come

Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom."

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Count Fruela entered again that room, he found his wife attired as she had been for so long a time in that castle, in the coarse gown of a slave, and the iron collar with my name upon it around her swan-like neck.

"What means this, Serena? Is this the proper attire for a Gothic Countess who is about to welcome a king to her Castle?"

"It is better so—my King. Flavio must never know that I am your wife, or he will suspect me. It is better so; on the other side of the grave he can know all, but here, with a false face, we must

hide what, with a false heart, we intend to perform this night."

He said no more, but produced a bottle which contained a colourless liquid. She took it in her firm white hand, and examined it, her pulse beating as regularly as before, although his manly hand trembled as he gave it to her.

"Infirm of purpose!" she muttered, as she hid the little bottle in her bosom, "Thou aspirest to a throne, but thou art too weak to win it!"

His eyes sought hers, but he was not able to sustain her stern, steady gaze when he met it, and involuntarily he turned his head away.

"Is everything ready?" she said.

"Yes."

"Then to act our parts; and mind, Don Fruela, that thy face betray not thy heart, for it were better thou hadst never been born, than that thou shouldst compromise thyself this night."

With a flourish of trumpets, and outspread banners, Don Flavio Quindasvinto approached the castle, followed by a gallant retinue of knights and pages.

The doors were thrown open, the drawbridges lowered, and the heavy portcullis raised, whilst I, attired in my best and richest gown, with a long mantle of purple, fastened at the shoulders with jewelled clasps, and accompanied by my aged mother, the Countess, Dona Theodolinda, stood in the principal entrance, ready to welcome his Highness.

Serena had been right in her supposition ; the soldiers did not accompany the King into the castle ; and amongst the many nobles and knights and pages, who alone entered the gates behind him, I recognised several of the neighbouring Counts who had sworn his fall. Passing through the great court-yard, I also noticed several hundred Spanish peasants, to all appearance peaceful shepherds, who had come from their farms to see the sight, but I entertained no doubt that they were there for some other purpose, and that they had deadly weapons hidden under their sheepskins. This sight convinced me that the poor King, who had innocently fallen into my brother's snares, would undoubtedly be sacrificed to his ambition, for wherever I cast my eyes, there I saw Spaniards and Goths whose looks told me only too plainly that treachery was in their hearts.

While the King, and Eugenio, Archbishop of Toledo, who had accompanied him, retired to the rooms we had hastily prepared for them, I descended the great staircase in search of my brother to try and persuade him to preserve the life of Recesvinto.

"I have nothing to do with that," he answered, "I have given the key of his dungeon to Serena, you should ask her, not me."

I was going to answer him angrily, for I felt his words to be most insulting, and all the blood rushed to my head as he uttered them, but one

look at him stopped the hot words on my tongue. He looked ghastly pale ; the usual kind expression had left his handsome face, his cheeks seemed to have become sunken, and there was a dark line under his eyes. I could not but feel pity for him at that moment, and I left the room in silence.

All this time Serena was on the top of the great tower, where the royal standard, with the silver cross, had now been hoisted, looking, with anxious eyes, in all directions for her faithful Spaniards, and for the Gothic soldiers, whom the nobles had promised to send at once, to support Don Fruela in this decisive outburst of the long-meditated revolution.

There were no glasses in those days, and the penetrating eyes of the Spaniard were scarcely powerful enough to search the distant plains. No horsemen could she see. Would the conspirators prove traitors at the last moment? Would the Spaniards be too frightened to advance fully armed, in front of the powerfully-guarded castle which for generations past had been an object of their greatest dread? It is true that her father, and a few of their countrymen, had already arrived, but what were they against the well-trained army of the Gothic monarch? She trembled as the thought passed through her burning brain—"If their plans were to fail?" With all her strength to bear misfortune, she dared not think of this.

Slowly she descended the turret stairs, and with

a step which grew firmer every moment, she entered the great Hall, where a banquet had been prepared for Flavio Quindasvinto.

Shortly afterwards the great doors were thrown open by our men-at-arms, and the king entered the hall, leading me by the hand, as my mother, being too old and delicate to preside at a banquet, had, after many excuses, retired to her private apartments.

We sat under a canopy of crimson velvet, heavily embroidered in gold, which had originally belonged to one of the Roman governors of Seville, and the courtiers and nobles sat on either side, my brother on the other side of the king, and the archbishop in front.

When we had all partaken of some of the numerous dishes which covered the well-spread board, the king arose, and addressing himself partly to me, and partly to the rest of the company present, thus spoke in slow and measured words.

“I have reigned now for many years over you all, my dear subjects, and since the day on which you raised me to the throne I now occupy, I have tried to govern you with all the justice and wisdom that has been in my power. All Spain knows me now, and you, noble count and your family, have had opportunities of knowing me perhaps better than the rest. My life has been as stormy as it has been long, and my reign

for a Gothic king has been unusually so. And as, according to the natural order of things, but few years of life can now remain to me, I think it better to begin at once to prepare my soul for the journey I shall soon be compelled to take. For soon will a stone in the Cathedral of Toledo mark the resting-place of your king, and this royal crown and this ermine mantle will then avail me nothing. But there is one treasure which I can take with me, one treasure which, in my eyes, is now more precious even than the regalia of royalty, that is—a clear conscience. Wicked I have been, and I feel obliged to confess that I have not always acted as I should have done; however, I have known how to govern Spain, and this is more than most of your kings have been able to do. But as I have learnt to judge myself with severity, you must not be surprised if perchance I judge you also severely. Listen to me, Doña Berenguela.”

What was coming? I could not imagine, and in my perplexity, I looked towards my brother; he was trembling visibly; he also seemed to dread what was coming; but Serena stood behind him calm and self-possessed, holding the wine-jug, out of which she, from time to time, filled his cup, whilst she endeavoured to encourage him with a few words, which I could not catch. After a short pause, the king began once more.

“When I came to the throne, your father

stipulated that my son should marry you, with the idea that he should succeed me in the government of Spain. Recesvinto was then a boy, you a mere child, but the marriage was arranged and you were betrothed. Later on, when Recesvinto had grown to be a man, I sent him hither to your brother's castle to see his bride; he was well pleased with you, and, at my command, readily agreed to the engagement, but on his way back to Toledo he met with a beautiful woman, a mere Spanish peasant, but a woman whose soul was great and whose mind raised her at once above her low degree, he fell in love with her and married her. I was furious at this marriage, for, according to our laws, it was an illegal one, and besides, I felt that he had acted against my wishes; but since then I have repented of my harshness; I called him to me, and promised him that if this woman, this Serena, after going through a certain ordeal, and suffering certain trials and probations, still remained worthy to be his wife, that I would pardon him and recognise the marriage."

While the king was thus speaking, all eyes were naturally turned towards Serena, who still stood motionless behind my brother. When he had first made allusion to her, her countenance had changed, but she gradually recovered some of her calmness and self-possession, her lustrous eyes had regained their keenness, though occasionally a painful expression flitted rapidly across her

already pacified face like the shadow of a dark thunder-cloud over the peaceful waves, which is the first warning of the approaching storm.

“One year has now elapsed,” continued the king, looking now for the first time at her. “The ordeal is ended, the severe trial of your virtue, noble Serena, is at an end ; throw down that cup, take off that symbol of slavery which encircles thy proud neck, and come to my arms, for thou art my son’s wife !”

The nobles looked at each other in speechless amazement, and Serena, for the first time in her life, stood bewildered and astonished.

“Yes,” continued the king, “I am convinced of thy courage, of thy fortitude, of thy virtue, of thy talents, and I have come with a gallant army to take thee back to my court, the bride of my son, the Princess of Spain. As for you, Doña Berenguela,” he added, turning towards me, “you have shown yourself so cruel and so hard-hearted towards this poor girl, and so untrue and unloving towards the prince, that I think it useless to tell you that you have for ever lost my esteem, and that your betrothal to my son no longer exists. You can have no claim upon him now, for I have altered the unjust law by which Serena became your slave, and at the request of the holy archbishop here present, whose wise counsel I always follow, I have given orders that the Spaniards should be

considered equal with the Goths hereafter throughout all Spain."

Serena was no longer bewildered, there was a determined look on her face, and she proudly raised her eyes from the ground on which they had been fixed until then. As she did so, she happened to glance through the large oriel window in front of her, and she saw that close under it there was gathered a numerous host which reached to the distant walls of the town. "Were they the soldiers of the conspirators at last?" One more look revealed to her the truth, she saw over their heads the royal standard proudly waving to and fro in the fresh morning air.

IV.

“When blind ambition quite mistakes her road,
And downward pores for that which shines above,
Substantial happiness and true renown,
Then, like an idiot gazing on the brook,
We leap at stars, and fasten in the mud;
At glory grasp, and sink in infamy.”

YOUNG.

“But your vast ambition shrinks from nought.”

MILTON.

IN one instant her mind was made up.

With her soft white hand she grasped the tiny bottle which she had worn all day, concealed in her bosom, once more she looked at the king, once more at her husband, and then unobserved she emptied its contents, to the last drop, with a sure pulse, into the cup—not of the king—but of her husband.

Don Fruela put it to his lips, and drained the contents.

He still held the cup in his hand, when one of his esquires entered the hall, with looks that announced terrible tidings, and going straight to him, whispered something in his ear. His countenance fell, and in a low, terrible voice, which thrilled through everyone present, he exclaimed—“We are betrayed.”

The greater part of the nobles and knights present rushed at once from the room believing that all was lost; and too anxious to save their lives to waste a moment longer in the castle, which was likely to become too hot for them.

“Fruela,” now said the king, in a powerful voice, “you have conspired against me, and you will share the fate of all conspirators, you will perish in your own shame. Those you thought traitors to *me* have become traitors to *you* you are surrounded by my soldiers. . . .”

Don Fruela, seeing all his plans frustrated, and maddened with rage, seized his sword with a powerful effort, and rushed with it towards the king, who had now moved to the end of the hall.

“I shall die, no doubt, but you shall first perish at my hands!”

“Here, to me!” exclaimed the king, and all those who remained in the room rallied round Flavio Quindasvinto.

Don Fruela suddenly uttered a fearful cry and fell heavily on the ground, whilst his sword, impelled by his unconscious hand, flew to the extreme end of the hall.

“I burn my heart is breaking. Great God, what is this!” he shouted, while his frame shook convulsively.

Serena approached him, and after a pause, during which she was evidently endeavouring to

master her emotion, so as to be able to speak calmly, she said :

“The poison thou didst prepare for thy king is working at this moment through thy veins!” With one more convulsive struggle, and uttering the word, “*Traitress!*” he fell down dead at her feet.

A smile of triumph passed over her lips. “Say rather, the deliverer of Spain,” she said, and falling at the king’s feet, she added, “So falls the last of the Arians, the last of thy enemies, oh great king!”

At the feet of the man who only an hour before she had intended to murder!

This scene was too much for me, and I fell fainting upon the seat, which I had been too bewildered to leave, even in the midst of the general confusion.

The hall was now full of the king’s followers, and the news of Don Fruela’s death had put to flight even the most courageous of the conspirators.

“Your son, sire, is here,” said Serena, kissing the hand which the king had graciously extended to her. “He is a prisoner in this castle.”

“My son here! Impossible!”

“Yes, your Highness, the traitor had imprisoned him.”

“And I believed him in Toledo all the while!”

“Give me leave and I will go myself and

release him from the deep dungeon in which he is confined."

The poor father was too much moved to speak, but he waved his hand, and Serena rushed out of the hall, followed by a few soldiers who, at the Archbishop's command, went to protect her against any of the conspirators who might yet lie concealed in the passages.

Shortly afterwards she once more entered the hall, leading Prince Recesvinto by the hand, who thought himself in a dream all the while, being naturally ignorant of all that had just taken place.

Father and son were soon clasped in each other's arms.

At this point I recovered my senses, and with the artificial strength of passionate excitement, I exclaimed :

"Believe her not, noble king, believe her not she was Fruela's wife indeed she was."

Both the king and the prince looked at me in astonishment.

"Can you believe her words ?" said Serena, in a calm, self-possessed voice.

The king looked at me, trembling with excitement and despair, and then at Serena, who stood there a perfect picture of innocence and truth.

"No," he said, "I cannot ;" and then turning towards her and placing her hand in that of Recesvinto, he continued, "You have saved his life, and

also the dynasty ; it is only just that I in my turn should save you and your nation. To-morrow the holy Eugenio will unite you for ever, in the great cathedral, which shall henceforth be a Catholic Basilica, and you will be Queen of Spain before long."

And no one present but I, knew that this very woman and my poor brother, whom she had so vilely sacrificed to her artful ambition, had lived for three months in that castle as husband and wife !

V.

“Let me go ! my soul is wearied,
No fond heart of me has need,
Life has no more duties for me ; —
I am but a broken reed ! ”

MARY HOWITT.

ON the morrow great feasts and rejoicings announced the approaching marriage of my rival, for although the old laws had been abrogated, yet the former marriage of Serena and Recesvinto was not considered valid. Three days afterwards they were solemnly married by the great Archbishop, in the Cathedral, which had previously been sanctified and dedicated to the blessed Virgin. Laureano, the Arian bishop, was burnt, although he offered to turn back to the original Catholic faith, but he possessed a secret which Serena was too anxious to preserve, so he, too, was sacrificed to her ambitious plans.

Although some of the people in the Castle knew that she had lived with Don Fruela as his wife, no one dared to say one word against the Princess of Spain, their future queen, whom the holy Eugenio had cited from the pulpit as a model of virtue and perfection. As for the two unfortunate esquires who had served as witnesses to her marriage, they

were found dead in their beds the day after her third marriage, a death which every one believed a judgment of God, for they had dared to calumniate the holy virgin ; who had chosen to deliver Spain, and render Recesvinto the happiest of kings.

For Recesvinto lived to be king after all ; and for many years reigned peacefully at Toledo with his beloved Serena by his side ; the most popular of the Gothic monarchs, and the most Catholic of the Catholic kings of Catholic Spain, for he lost no opportunity of proving his zeal for the true faith, by burning all those who dared to hold different opinions on the subject of religion. Arians and Jews, Arabs and Gipsies, all were condemned to the flames, together with their books and papers, which were soon reduced to ashes ; whilst their estates and property were confiscated to the crown, thus outvying the glories of the zealous martyrs, displayed at the time of the Roman persecutions, and even equalling those won by the holy inquisitors, a few centuries later.

Some said that it was the proud Spanish Queen who prompted all this praiseworthy persecution ; but most people believed that it was at the inspiration of the meek and loving Jesus that the furnaces were constantly kept up in the great squares of Seville and Toledo, consuming in their flames the bodies of the accursed Arians, Jews, and Moors, who still dared to deny his Divinity.

Recesvinto was happy with his Serena, although the passion he felt for her was scarcely love. He admired her great spirit, and he pitied her for the trials she had been obliged to suffer at my hands; he firmly believed in her, and in her divine mission, and thought, consequently, that *he ought to feel* himself the happiest of men. There were moments, however, when the remembrance of his first love would steal upon him, and he sometimes wondered whether that beautiful and sweet creature he had first learnt to love at Seville, could be as wicked as she was now pictured to him to be by his ambitious Spanish wife.

There is no truth more unquestionable than that blessings procured through foul means turn into curses, and that crime, even when successful, invariably entails its own punishment; yet, as this punishment does not always follow in the same earthly life, Serena lived for many years happy upon the throne her crime had procured her. It is true that she penitently confessed her crime to the holy Eugenio, but he, seeing the blessings which that crime had brought about, and the ascendancy the Catholic faith had obtained by its means, could not possibly refuse her his absolution and blessing; so she was forgiven by the church and held by her Catholic subjects as little less than a saint.

As for me, I was broken-hearted. It is true that my love for Recesvinto had turned into hate, so much did I despise him for his conduct

towards me, but all the time I would gladly have given my life to have him once more near me. A long illness followed the events of that dreadful day when my brother had been so shamefully sacrificed, for my constitution had received a shock from which it never recovered ; I was no longer the beautiful Dona Berenguela. My aged mother, also, unable to bear the news of her beloved son's assassination, had died shortly afterwards, of a broken heart.

I was spared a few years longer, but very few, and they weighed as heavily upon me as so many centuries. At length, impelled by the strength of madness, I managed to fly to Toledo and seek the Prince, to reveal to him the whole truth about his wife, but I was baffled every time by Serena, who naturally dreaded any communication I might have with her husband as fatal to herself.

And after a short time she managed to induce the king to sign an order for my retirement into a convent, pretending that this was the only way of saving my soul from the horrors of eternal hell, which otherwise would have awaited me at death for having remained an Arian.

I retired to the convent against my will, and there I felt even more lonely than in the world ; the good nuns treated me with disdain, and even with hatred, for I still professed the heresies of Arius, and the priests condemned me to everlast-

ing punishment for adhering to the faith in which my dear mother had brought me up.

At last, heart-broken and weary of existence, I put an end to my life, by throwing myself from the bell tower, the only place from which I was allowed to behold the blue sky, and in my thirty-sixth year I once more left the world for the brighter regions of eternal life.

VI.

“ I will not tire thy patient ear
With tedious details of my woe,
But bring my rambling speech to bear
On that I wish thee most to know.”

ELIZA COOK.

OF eternal life, but not of bliss ; for my sufferings did not end with my life. To escape the punishment due to one sin I had committed another, which in its turn I was obliged to expiate, for of all crimes, self-destruction is one of the greatest, and one which is perhaps the most severely punished in the spiritual world.

Even at this distance of time I shrink from reviving the memory of what I then suffered. I passed whole years wandering over the scenes of my last earthly existence, the only one I could then remember ; and for centuries I was obliged to travel with the light, always following the rays which conveyed the last scenes of that miserable life into universal space with a velocity of 12,000,000 miles per minute, and thus I was condemned to have perpetually before my vision those things, the recollection of which I had wished to escape by putting an end to my earthly career.

Ah, Walter ! can you conceive any punishment equal to this ? Surely the flames of the hell with which I had been so often threatened during my life, would have been preferable to this. Anything to forget that you and Serena lived still happy and revered by all ; anything to forget that last struggle with life which I now suffered continually, for I always believed myself at the foot of the tower of the convent, my limbs shattered on the stone pavement, my face disfigured by the fall, my spirit vainly struggling to free itself from its broken frame, which was now no longer fit to contain it.

Oh, horrible !

The recollection of those weary, awful years make me still shudder, for that punishment lasted for years ! how many ! I could not tell, for out of the material world there is no day and no night with which to mark the divisions of time, and those long, long years seemed to me one eternal night.

But I see, dearest Walter, that the description of the punishment I had but too well deserved, makes you suffer. Ah, if you knew those to which other spirits are subjected ! If you knew those which the ambitious Serena underwent after her death in spite of the absolution which the sainted Archbishop Eugenio had pronounced upon her crimes, and the masses and prayers which accompanied her from the earth, where many people still believed her the divine

instrument of their liberty and happiness ! But I will not pain your impressionable soul by their enumeration ; they are the natural consequences of sin and crime, consequences to which we have all been subject, for it is only through expiations of this kind that we at last attain the kingdom of Heaven, and become pure and wise spirits.

But the most wicked need not despair ; they are as much God's sons as are the pure and good, and our Heavenly Father is merciful as well as just. He has placed his elder Son, his beloved Son, who was before the world was, to rule over this earth, and *he* who is our protector and redeemer will always help and aid us to carry each our individual cross, the cross through which we can *alone* attain perfection.

Walter, is Christ indeed the saviour of mankind ? Happy those who have faith in Christ !

At last, after many years of continual punishment, I was again incarnated on this earth, but only to suffer more trials, only to give me another chance of being good, and not to enjoy any superfluous happiness. You were not by my side then, your career lay in another direction—this once, and for the first time since the days of Ananda and Channa we were incarnated at different periods upon the earth.

I was born in the Tyrol, in the sequestered valley of the Inn, not far from the spot where the pretty little town of Innsbruck rises to-day

by the glinting waters of the river of that name.

I was born of poor though honest peasants; and the circle of my knowledge was consequently very limited, yet I learnt many things in that solitary life; many things without which I should not be what I am now, and neither should I experience the greatest happiness of all, that of being perpetually near you and of being useful to you, and to the little spirit who has come to live by your side; our dear Raphael, that other being whom I have loved and for whom I have suffered so much. Martinian, Fruela, Caesar, Raphael! Oh, what dear recollections those names bring back to my mind. I do not know how I love him best, as a friend, a brother, a protector, or a son. And you too, should love him, Walter, for he has been dear to you in the past. But I must not waste your time by thus expressing my sentiments. In my world there is no time, and I always forget that you are still in a world where rest is necessary, and where business and duties call you at every moment.

There is your couch awaiting you, which reminds me that I must hasten my story.

I will not now dwell on the events of that life; they would be uninteresting to you, as indeed they are now even to me, although at the time they were everything to my poor spirit, but things seem so different when seen from a dis-

tance. The cares and troubles of this world, which so affect our happiness, while in it, become so unimportant and trivial when we look back upon them from the ever-beautiful scenes of eternal life! I can only compare them to the little troubles of childhood, which draw so many tears from our infant eyes, and which when we are grown-up men and women we only look back upon with a smile.

It is sufficient for you to know that my name was Margaret, and that I was poor, and dependent upon a stern and unloving aunt, for the little I required ; a trial which was put upon me, partly to punish me for the cruelty I had shown towards my slaves, and particularly towards Serena in my previous existence, when the rich and powerful Berenguela ; and partly to teach me the true worth of money and of independence, of which until then I was ignorant. That existence, however, with its troubles and trials, affected my character greatly, and I can tell you that but for it I could never have become the sweet Conchita you fell in love with at first sight, in Seville.

And yet, at the time it seemed to be a useless existence, if I might dare to express myself thus. I was poor and was surrounded by none but humble peasants like myself, and my spirit seemed to long for something grander and greater. I hardly seemed to be in my sphere—and yet to my knowledge I had never known any other. I was a

mystery to all around me, even to my own self; for I was then ignorant of the law of reincarnation, and never dreamt of attributing my strange reminiscences to a previous existence.

And how many persons do we find, who every day wonder at similar mysterious yearnings and strivings which they feel in their hearts, and yet are unable to explain? How many people do we know in one station of life, who, by right, seem to have been created for another, and who scarcely feel in their proper sphere, even when they have been born to it? I know of several such cases. You remember that farm labourer at Carlton Hall, Walter dear, to whom we used to speak sometimes in our walks—he was a gentleman, one of nature's gentlemen, as they are called, yet he was uneducated, he had never associated in *that* life with any but common labourers like himself, but in *another*—in a previous one—ah! there the mystery is explained, there is the key to his superior nature.

I also remember a certain nobleman, on the other hand—an Earl, the descendant of a very long line of illustrious ancestors, who preferred the society of mechanics and sailors to that of the great world to which he had been born, and who, in spite of his noble descent and good education, could only be happy when driving an engine or steering a ship. Surely he must have had a past, a past in which he had belonged to *that*

sphere of life, besides he had an extraordinary talent for mechanical inventions, surely he had been accustomed to such occupations, for if not, how can we account for his tastes !

And then, do we not meet every day men with all the tastes of women ; and strong-minded women who are men in everything but the form ? Surely for them also we must seek an explanation in the past, they too must have lived before—or else, how can we possibly account for tastes which seem so out of place ?

But to go back to that particular existence of mine, I will tell you of another cause which rendered me most unhappy. I entertained a mortal fear of death. You must remember that I was but a poor simple and ignorant peasant, and then, perhaps, you will excuse me. Unprogressed, undeveloped spirits, who cannot imagine anything beyond this life, become so easily attached to every object around them, that they get to cherish even their miseries. Their minds, which are incapable of conceiving any higher life, and are accustomed only to certain surroundings, insensibly become fond of them, and part from them with reluctance. Hence proceeds their avarice at old age in every kind of possession ; they love the world and all that it contains ; they love life and all its surroundings, not because it gives them pleasure—no, for often they who love the world the most, are precisely they who have suffered the most in it ; but

because they have known it long, because they have got accustomed to it, and because their minds can picture nothing beyond.

But I had another reason for dreading death. I had suffered so much after my last death! Of this reason I was *then* of course ignorant, not remembering anything beyond that present life, for God in His Supreme mercy, suspends the recollection of their past to the unpurified spirits who could only make a bad use of this knowledge, and which would only serve to embitter the few moments of happiness which they may in their ignorance enjoy.

But this ignorant fear of death was also beneficial to my spirit—it made me seek the priest of our little valley, and listen to his encouraging words with a respect and veneration which I should not otherwise have bestowed upon them. I sought for consolation in religion, and religion gave me faith—a blind faith, it is true, and a faith in cruel and unphilosophical doctrines; yet it was about the only standard of religion I could then have comprehended. The good old priest spoke to me of hell and of heaven, of the eternal torments of the wicked, and of the everlasting bliss of the just. He taught me to believe in a jealous God, who visited the sins of the fathers on the sons, and who sent the wicked to eternal damnation—and yet who was, at the same time, just and merciful, and had sent his own son upon

the earth to save the wicked, and that through this Son we could alone inherit the kingdom of Heaven.

Absurd and self-contradictory as these doctrines may appear to me now, they proved then most beneficial to my spirit ; for the fear of an eternal hell made me shrink from many a bad deed which, in my ignorance, I might have committed ; and the promise of an eternity of complete happiness, made me *sometimes* almost long for death ; but only *sometimes*, for at others the unaccountable but depressing fear of old came upon me, and I dreaded death more than ever, for I could not think of it without thinking of the grave !

VII.

“ We close the eye and close the ear
 Wrapped in a dream of bliss,
And gently laid in loving arms
 We swoon from that to this,
Passing through death to eternity.”

SHAKSPEARE.

CONFIDENCE in a future life does not wholly remove the apprehension with which the passage from this life to the other is regarded.

Many do not so much fear death as death ; what they dread most is the moment of transition. Is there, or is there not suffering in the passage ? That is the question which troubles the mind, and which raises the apprehension of suffering which no one can hope to escape from. I will try and solve this mystery to you, my dear husband.

When I described to you my last *death*, as Miriam, I described an easy, pleasant, painless death, for the facility with which the separation of the spirit from its material envelope is effected, depends upon the moral conditions of the spirit ; the affinity subsisting between the fluidicity that forms the bond between the soul and the body (which fluidic body I shall hereafter call *périsprit*), and the material frame being due to the force of sympathy between it and its material envelope. The attrac-

tion is, therefore, at its maximum where the thoughts are concentrated on this world and on its sensual enjoyments ; and at its minimum where the purified spirit has already identified itself with spirit life. The difficulty of the separation, then, has direct relation to the state of purity and de-materialisation of the soul ; and it depends upon the life of each individual, to render the passage more or less easy or difficult, agreeable or painful.

When you behold the calm which attends the death-beds of some, and the convulsive agonies which afflict those of others, you may easily infer that the sensations experienced are not always the same. But who will describe to men the psychological conditions under which the separation of soul and body takes place ! Who can convey to those yet in the world the impressions of that supreme moment ? On this point science and religion are both mute, for they are both equally ignorant of the laws which regulate the relations between matter and spirit ; science is arrested on the threshold of physical life—religion on that of spirit life. Only a spirit who has undergone it can explain its mysteries, and he sees that there is no mystery in it whatever ; for nothing more supernatural accompanies a departure *from*, than an entrance *into* this world ; for that which passes the ken of mortal eye is not necessarily outside the order of nature.

Death and birth are then exactly the same.

To be born upon the earth you are obliged to die in the spirit world, to be re-born in the spirit world you are obliged to re-die on the earth ; to be re-born on the earth you are once more obliged to die in the spirit world, and thus you go on until the soul is entirely purified and perfected, for the entire history of a spirit is that of these changes which you call birth and death, and which I should substitute for one word equally expressive of both —*transition*, transition from one world to another ; transition from one state to another ; transition from one sphere of life to another.

I will now try to explain to you, my dear Walter, the different ways in which these *transitions* are brought about.

When death is the result of the natural exhaustion of the vital forces from age or disease, the disengagement of the *périsprit* takes place gradually where the soul is dematerialised, and the thoughts are already withdrawn from earthly things ; this separation is almost accomplished before organic life is extinct ; the body still retaining its vitality when the soul has already entered into spirit life, and is only retained in connection with the body by the feeblest links. These links are easily severed without suffering at the last pulsation of the heart. Under such conditions the spirit may have regained its lucidity and become the conscious witness of the extinction of the life of the body. It experiences little, if any,

anxiety; only a few moments of peaceful slumber, from which it awakens with an indefinable feeling of hopeful joy.

Such was my last death, of which I have already given you a lengthy account.

But when, as during my earlier existence, the life has been one of materiality—of a continuous and pertinacious gratification of the senses; where there has been no exaltation of the spirit; and where the future has had no place in the evolutions of the mind, as for example in Ananda;—in such cases the union of the *périsprit* with the body becomes most tenacious, and its disengagement can only be accomplished by violent efforts—hence the desperate sufferings, the convulsive agonies, which attend such death-beds, and which are nothing more nor less than the struggles which the spirit has to sustain before it can finally break the chain that still binds it to the body.

Our first death is indeed only accomplished through great sufferings. Seeing nothing beyond this world, the spirit attaches itself more strongly to organic life; under the apprehension of losing it, it clings the more closely to it. In place of yielding to the natural influences by which it should be attracted, the spirit resists with all its power, and so prolongs the struggle for days, for weeks, it may even be for months.

But the suffering to which the spirit is subjected

is proportionate to the length of time occupied in the disengagement of the *périsprit* which, as I have already told you, forms the bond between soul and body. The rapidity of its disengagement is proportionate to the moral progress of the spirit, and to the succession of earthly lives it has undergone.

Hence, the position of a dematerialized or more purified spirit, is a very different one.

St Paul tells us that "*there is a natural body, and that there is a spiritual body.*" He tells us that there *is*, not that there will *be* "a spiritual body." Now, this *spiritual body* is the *périsprit*. During life, it permeates all parts of the natural body, and becomes the vehicle for the transmission of all physical sensations ; while at the same time it is the medium of communication from the soul by which all movements of the body are directed. After death, as during life, it forms the body of the spirit, its *spiritual body* or envelope. What you see of me is this body, it is not my spirit but my *périsprit*, and such was the body with which Jesus Christ walked amongst men, and appeared as one of them.

But as the butterfly's folded wings can be traced under the shell of the chrysalis, and may even in its rudimentary state be seen in the caterpillar before its first change, so every portion of this spiritual body is contained and wrapped up during life in the material form. At the extinction of

organic life, soul and body are separated by the departure of this *périsprit* which unites them. This separation is, however, never sudden ; this fluidic body disengages itself little by little from all the organs in such a manner that the disunion is not fully accomplished until every atom of the *périsprit* is withdrawn from every molecule of the body. The painful sensations experienced during the rupture being due to the number of points of contact existing between the *périsprit* and the greater or less time required to effect the severance.

This is why *de*-materialized spirits can part with infinitely greater ease from their earthly bodies than sensual or unpurified ones. The fluidic bonds by which they are united with the body being feeble, they are easily disengaged. After death, the bonds being once broken, no painful reaction is felt ; the awakening is accompanied by a joyous feeling of deliverance from a heavy burden, and an assurance that there shall be no more sorrow.

Death, when produced by violence, does not take place under precisely similar conditions. No partial disintegration has led previously to the separation of the *périsprit* from the body ; life, in all its vigour, has been suddenly arrested. The separation of the *périsprit* cannot, therefore, commence until after death ; and in this case, as in others, it does not take place instantaneously. The spirit taken unawares is, as it were, stunned ;

it continues, therefore, to inhabit the body even after its decomposition has begun, and the struggle is long and terrible. In cases of suicide it is peculiarly awful, for the *périsprit* clings to the body in every fibre, and the convulsions of the body react upon the soul, and produce fearful sufferings.

This may perhaps explain to you what I suffered after my fall from the Convent tower [at Toledo, when my body lay in a shapeless mass on the marble pavement below ; and my spirit, too material and imperfect then, could not free itself from it.

My death as Margaret, however, was not to be so fearful. I will try and describe it to you.

After a long illness, which had already lasted several weeks, and during which I had grown weaker and weaker, I was lying half-unconscious in my bed ; the few neighbours and friends that surrounded me were grief-stricken, and even the unloving aunt I have already mentioned was weeping ; such is the effect produced by death. Beside me, on one side, stood a man who had loved me much when we were both young, and who I had twice refused to wed, because I felt, although I could not tell why, that I could never love him as he loved me—and he had remained single, as I had done ; on the other side stood the good old priest, who now and then encouraged me with a few words which he thought the most fitted to

prepare me for the "dreaded voyage" I was going to undertake.

"Hope, hope, my child, a moment more and you will be in the presence of Jehovah, and Christ, and the blessed Virgin Mary, and St Margaret, your beloved patroness, and you will be for ever happy."

But I will not tell you what these people saw, nor what I felt, but what really took place, and what takes place at every person's death.

My feet first grew cold, and as life began to cease, a magnetic emanation began to collect over my head, at a short distance from it. It was the *périsprit* beginning to disengage itself from the material body. This then gradually grew cold up to the knees and elbows, and the emanation ascended higher in the air. My legs got cold to the hips, and my arms to the shoulders, and the emanation, although it had not arisen higher in the room, became more expanded.

The dreadful moments of agony now began, I felt a creeping feeling all through my frame, and the awful chill of death began to steal over my heart! I ceased to breathe, my pulse became still, and the emanation over my head became elongated, and took the outline of the human form. Beneath, it was connected with my brain, my head internally throbbing a slow deep throb—regular but not painful, for I felt no pain now. The brain being the last to yield up the life

principle, my thinking faculties still existed, although nearly every other part of my frame was dead. Owing to this momentum of the brain, I was able to rise up impulsively in my bed and recite the first words of the Credo, but the next instant I fell back unconscious. I was dead !

The persons in the room then gathered round my humble couch, and commenced those final duties with which the living consecrate the dead, be he peasant or king. They closed the eye-lids over my sightless eyes, and knelt down, directed by the good priest in the good old Catholic fashion, praying for my soul.

Prayer is good, it is a kind of spiritual magnetism which promotes the final disengagement of the spirit from the mortal frame it has quitted.

My *périsprit* was now midway up to the ceiling of the little cottage room, but it was still connected with the brain it had for so long animated, by a very fine life-thread. The next thing was the withdrawal of this electric principle. When the thread snaps, the spiritual body is free ; but this sometimes only take place after a time, as in the case of Lazarus for instance, whose life-thread was not broken, even after having been for four days in the grave, and hence the mystery of his resurrection. But this hardly ever happens, for it requires no less a power than that of a Christ to be able to restore the spirit to its old frame when once out of it.

At the moment of the final separation, the spirit never retains its lucidity ; it falls ; so to speak, asleep, and is unconscious of what is going on.

The bonds being once broken, and the last link of the *périsprit* finally severed, a painful reaction is felt, but this, of course, as I have already told you, depends upon the affinity existing between the body and the *périsprit* ; the greater that affinity, the longer and more painful are the efforts made to accomplish the severance, and the intensity and duration of the reaction is more painful. There are, however, cases where the attraction is so feeble, that the separation is effected naturally, the soul is separated from the body as a ripe fruit is detached from its branch. In such cases death is calm, and the awakening peaceful.

I shall limit myself however to the experiences of that particular death. I felt stunned, but as I perceived all the sensations connected with organic life, I believed myself still alive, and I looked upon my *périsprit* as though it were my old body, of which it was a perfect prototype, only, perhaps, a little smaller, and without the disfigurements brought about by age and sickness. I felt, however, like a new born child, I could hardly realise my sensations.

I could not tell you how long I remained in this state, but it seemed a long, long time. I knew that I was dead, and I wondered when I

should be taken to the presence of the great Jehovah. For after death the feelings and ideas remain the same as when in life. It is said that after death all are alike, but this is untrue, it is impossible ; all spirits are *similar* in the universe, but no two *exactly alike*.

There are some spirits in the solar space who have been dead for years, and are still prayerfully expecting that the “great day of judgment” will come, and that they will either be raised “to heaven,” or condemned for ever “to hell.” No wonder then that when such spirits communicate to mediums, they should teach the notions of Catholic orthodoxy, or even the cruel doctrines of Calvin,—if they had happened to die in that faith. So that you would be constrained to exclaim,—“What contradictions ! Am I to believe in spirits when they tell us all sorts of contradictory things?” and the influential daily papers, and the scientific monthly and quarterly journals say, “Spiritualism is rubbish.” “If it were true, Spirits would understand their own world as accurately as earthly minds understand common affairs.” But this is not reasonable, it is not possible even when speaking of people inhabiting this world ; ask a Negro from Africa, who has never quitted his own country, and an Englishman from Oxford, their opinions of the world in which they both live and see if their ideas agree.

As for seeing God—God ! Ay ! where, oh where

is He not ! As surely as there is a soul within the outward form of matter, which makes that matter man ; as surely as it is the spirit resident within the chambers of the mind, which makes that mind a power ; as surely as it is the growth of spirit through the lapse of ages, which has converted the world of barbarism into the world of civilization ; just so surely is there a spirit world within this natural world, invisible, but full of life, a human world, where all the buds and flowers and seeds of human life, too often untimely nipped, are gathered up and form the blossoms of eternity—the soul of the natural world. Man is a microcosm, the universe is a Great Man ; and the totality of soul that quickens it, is the mighty uncreated mind which ever was and ever will be ; the sum of that wondrous intelligent power which writes its laws in universal scriptures through creation. **THAT SUM IS GOD !** That master mind—that Alpha and Omega of all existence, we are taught to call “ **OUR FATHER,**” is **A SPIRIT !**

Sometimes we gaze upon His glittering halls of heaven, in starlit midnight skies. Sometimes we stand within His earthly courts, the purple mountain side, the flowery vale, or ride on the tossing ocean’s foam. Sometimes we hear Him whispering in the breeze, or shouting in the storm, or rushing wind. Sometimes we feel the throbbing of His heart in the heaving of the earthquake ;

but nought is so full of Him as our own wondrous souls, by whose power we learn to feel that all things are revelations of Him ; in whose inmost depths we know that He is with us, and that we are parts of Him. We are just as near God in the material world, as in the spiritual world. He inhabits the fields and cities of this earth as well as the immeasurable regions where millions of suns revolve around the universal centre. Therefore I tell you that death will not bring us one step nearer to Him.

And yet it is true that spirits after death undergo a judgment, but the awful and dreaded Judgment Hall is their own heart, and the accusing angels are memory and light—for according to the laws of light, which I have already explained to you, every spirit sees after death its entire life over again ; whatsoever its life has been, what it has lived for, what it has drawn to itself, and poured out its magnetism upon, becomes its world. According to what your earthly life has been, so will be your spiritual life, you cannot change it, you cannot alter it, for heaven is a state, not a place. Here you behold the physical sun lighting your earth ; you recognise all your surroundings as physical. In the world of spirits they are of a purely spiritual character, and instead of shining, blazing, or darkening upon you from without, they all proceed from within. Hence, if your mind is dark and your soul is grovelling,

and there is no light within, you are in the thick darkness that is seen and felt. It is because there is no light within, that unhappy spirits tell me they are alone when they are in the midst of multitudes ; that they are in darkness, when the ten thousand million suns of the universe are shining most gloriously upon them. Thus it is that in the darkest night, in the deepest dungeon, in the cellars, and in the gutters of physical life, there is often glorious spiritual sunlight, for the angel brings his light within, the shining and the lustrous soul reflects about him his own beauty, and creates his own scenery and his own landscapes. All this, I know, is almost inconceivable to you. But remember that the *transition* called death is the transmutation of all the laws of matter into those of spirit ; that it casts off all the experiences of a physical world ; and that it liberates pure and dematerialized spirits with their magnetic *périsprits* into the broad and glorious vistas of eternity, where every living creature goes to its place, for as the great Indian Bible, the Bhagavat Geeta, expresses it :—

“The recompense acquired by good or evil deeds is like the waves of the sea, whose working none can hinder ; it is like a cord which binds them to their author, and which none can break For the education of our preceding life influences us in the life that follows If a man has done the works that lead to the world of

the Moon, he goes to the world of the Moon . . . If a man has done the works that lead to the Sun, he goes to the world of the Sun ; if a man has done the works that lead to the world of the Creator, he goes to the world of the Creator. Thus the soul goes to the world to which its works belong. What, then, is the use of giving oneself up to the gratification of sensual desires ? Abandon yourself to the satisfactions of sense, and all you will have got from this indulgence will be to have forged for yourself, at death, the chains that will link you to other bodies and to other worlds. There is no other source of peace, or of usefulness, than the knowledge of the Creator . . . The soul, on returning to the earth, profits by its previous acquirements : and thus through a long succession of gradual advances . . . and only after many new births . . . The soul that has become pure and wise is, at length, enfranchised from the necessity of coming back to this earth, and goes to the *pure*. When those great souls have attained perfection, they return no more to the perishable life of earth, sojourn of sorrows The love of virtue is the Supreme Path, those who have attained to that elevation undergo no more births, but take on luminous bodies."

But before quitting this subject, of the true philosophy of death, there is one parting word that I would yet give you.

When Jesus Christ, the Protector and Re-

claimer of mankind, last visited our earth, He told us to pray to God—‘to His Father and our Father’—oh, put your trust in Him, dearest husband. He is the God of the living, and not of the dead. With Him there is no death; with Him the promise that He made is not in vain, and there shall indeed be no more death.

“Whatever be the form or mode of change, whatever be the disruption in physical systems, whether by violence or by natural decay; whether you drop like o’er-ripe fruit, or violently rush off through the gates of life, expelled by the hand of murder; you are in the hand of Him, the ever-living God: the change is for the better, the schoolhouse of instruction is far wider, and many are its different classes; and the experiences of the hereafter will ever be progressive. Trust to Him, Walter, trust to Him, and you shall go out no more in the darkness of the grave, no more in the shadow of the dreaded tomb, but through the arch of a risen life, piloted by the liberty-angel of eternity, to find yourself, after the transition called death, a glorious, risen spirit, shining, to use Christ’s own words, ‘like the sun in the firmament of heaven.’ For,

‘The mind, which is immortal, makes itself
Requital for its good or evil thoughts—
Is its own origin of ill and end,
And its own place and time; its innate sense,
When stripp’d of this mortality, derives
No colour from the fleeting things without,

But is absorb'd in suffering or in joy,
Born from the knowledge of its own desert.' "

As she recited the verses, her gentle form became gradually more and more indistinct, until, completely lost in the shades of night, it finally disappeared, as it had come; leaving behind it upon the balcony no visible trace of its heavenly presence.

For a short time I remained on the spot where she had stood, meditating on what she had said, and half lost in a sweet reverie; until the metallic chimes of a hundred churches, sounding one after another, reminded me of the already late hour of the night, and made me think of repose.

A FEW MORE SCENES OF EVERY-DAY LIFE.

I.

“ So the dreams depart,
So the fading phantoms flee,
And the sharp reality
Now must act its part.”

WESTWOOD.

I AWOKE very late the next morning, and after my servant had brought me my coffee—which he did about ten o'clock, breakfast in the Havana being always a much later affair—I remained in my bed half awake, half asleep, glancing carelessly now and then at the newspaper which lay beside me—*El Diario de la Marina*, if I remember rightly. As I fixed my eyes upon the large printed sheet before me, wondering what I ought to read first, my eyes chanced to rest upon a well-known name—the Duke de Miranda. I rubbed my eyes, and now, quite awake, I read the wonderful piece of news, which I translate almost literally as it comes to my mind :—

“ We hear that the marriage of the Duke de Miranda, grandee of Spain of the first class, who

has just returned to this island from his travels abroad, and only son of the much-admired Cuban lady, Doña Rosa de Marianao, widow of the late Duke de Miranda, with the Señorita Doña Filomena Muñoz de Castro, and daughter of General Muñoz, will shortly take place. 'This marriage had been arranged by their parents shortly after their birth, but the long engagement is now drawing to a close. We sincerely congratulate the young nobleman on the prospect of his happy union with the beautiful and *simpatica* daughter of the tropics, whom we hope shortly to admire as Duchess de Miranda."

I was thunderstruck—could this be possible?—and yet why not? It was only too probable that the handsome Duchess, who is such a patriotic Cuban, should have contracted an engagement for her son with the daughter of a Cuban family. But did Lady Leigh know of this? That was the first question that crossed my mind; surely not, or she would scarcely have made such a dead set at him,—and Miss de Fison!

I dressed as fast as I could, and I hurried out of my room, which, as I have described already, opened into a wide marble corridor which ran the whole length of the house, and which looked upon the inside court-yard, along which I went until I arrived at the turning, where it emerged into the great dining-room. Here a bright idea struck me. Just before me were General Herbert's rooms; I

would go in and find out all about it. Surely Mrs Herbert knew the doings of the town, if any one did. I could not go to a better person for information.

I knocked at the door, which was opened by a little negro, the pet servant of the General. He was dressed in a page's suit, much too large for him, and carried, perched on his shoulder, the Portuguese Consul's wee monkey, *Don Simon*, a fierce little animal, who was allowed to run about the hotel; and seemed quite as much at home in the American Consul's rooms as in his master's.

"Is your mistress at home?" I asked eagerly.

"She is not *at home*, massa, but she is breakfasting," was the bewildering answer I received.

"Do you think she will see me?" I further enquired, while the monkey and the negro made faces at me, and I felt the likeness to be so strong between them that I could not help laughing outright.

"Oh, Lord! she won't mind *you*!" he at last said, rather disgusted with my laughter, which he entertained some misgivings was not wholly produced by Don Simon, who was, as a rule, the most serious of monkeys, and in whom *he* never saw anything to laugh at.

I went in, and found Mrs Herbert in the parlour, as he had said, which parlour looked over the town, and had consequently a fine aspect of chimney pots, and cats, a view which she, perhaps, considered preferable to that of the bright bay, with its

innumerable ships, which I saw from my windows, my room being on the opposite side of the hotel ; she was breakfasting, and beside her on the table stood the wise-looking parrot who was supposed to say most clever things, when nobody was in the room. Mrs Herbert studied conversation as an art, and this was perhaps the object of the parrot ; although I sometimes wished she would take occasional lessons from that wise bird, and speak a little less.

“ Have you seen the paper this morning ? ” I said, entering into the subject at once, and dispensing with the conventional—How do you do’s ? and, Fine day this !—which at other times came only too naturally to my tongue.

“ What about it ? ” she said, a little astonished at my anxious looks, and evidently unwilling to confess that she had not read the paper.

“ Why, the news of the young Duke’s marriage to a Doña Filomena Muñoz de Castro.”

“ Ah ! ” she exclaimed, looking as wise as even the parrot might have done had it not been too much occupied at that moment with the egg on its mistress’ plate.

“ But is it true ? ”

“ Of course, if you had asked me before, I might have told you what every one in the Island knows, that the Duke de Miranda had been engaged since he was a boy of five to the daughter of General Muñoz, then only Colonel Muñoz, who,

by the by, was at the time a little angel in Valenciennes, scarcely six months old."

"But how is it that nobody has talked about it before me all this time, when I don't believe an hour has ever passed without the Duke's name being introduced *apropos* of one thing or another?"

"It is not my fault; surely, Lord Carlton, you are not going to blame *me* for not telling you the very first time I saw you the private histories of all my acquaintances; but I think I had better begin at once, or else you will accuse me by and by of hiding from you what every one knows. Stay! let me see.

"Ah! Mrs Stanhope Smith, the pretty little widow who is stopping at the Télégrafo Hotel is engaged to be married to Don Jaime Fulano de Tal, a rich merchant. Miss Thomson is about to contract a matrimonial alliance with"

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed, with but little politeness; "you are making fun of me."

"Indeed, I am not, Lord Carlton," she answered, most seriously. "Am I, dearest Cocotte?" she inquired of the parrot, whose only answer was a shrill scream, which might be interpreted at will. "You seem most anxious to be *au fait* of everybody's affairs. I am trying to help you to the best of my ability; now, where was I? . . . ah, I guess I remember; yes, Miss Thomson is about to contract a matrimonial alliance with"

“ Oh ! do stop and be sensible for once, dear Mrs Herbert.”

“ Am I not always sensible ? ”

“ When you are not laughing at me ! ”

“ Ah ! of course people who laugh at you must be great fools.”

“ Let us be serious now, and do tell me all about the Duke, and his Cuban bride ; is she very pretty ? ”

“ Of course ! ” she answered, with a twinkling in her bright eyes ; “ of course ! ”

“ But who is she ? ”

“ You know that as well as I do, Lord Carlton ; she is the daughter of General Muñoz, one of the Generals of the African campaign ; her mother, Doña Luz de Castro and the Duchess were intimate friends, and it was arranged between them that their children should marry, so that they might become grand-mothers just at the same time. Doña Luz Muñoz de Castro, however, died a few years ago, and her daughter, the little Filomena, has been, until quite lately, in a convent, and this is the reason, I suppose, why you have not come across her yet, *dans le monde*. And yet, stop, you saw her only three days ago at the bull-fight, she came to the Duke’s box with the Countess de Guanabacoa.”

“ What ! ” I exclaimed, surprised ; “ was *that* the Duchess, that is to be ? ”

“ Yes.”

“But *which?* for, if I remember right, there were no less than three young ladies, and all were dressed alike in mantillas.”

“*Which?*” that is most difficult to explain, for they are certainly very much alike, the other two are her cousins, but I think Doña Filomena is the tallest of the three.”

“I wish I had known how interesting she was, to have had a good look at her; as it is, I feel like the child who goes out to see the King, and mistakes the coachman for his Majesty; it is really most unsatisfactory to be told that you have been looking at the wrong person all the time!”

“You seem to take great interest in the transactions of that family!”

“Well—yes, I do not deny the fact, Mrs Herbert, but do you think he loves her?”

“Loves her! Why should he?”

“But if he is going to be married to her?”

“His opinion was never consulted; besides, at the time the engagement was arranged, if asked what he loved best, he would have answered, ‘sugar-candy!’”

“I should not like to be married in that way.”

“But goodness gracious, Lord Carlton, what are you driving at? Why should the poor duchess not marry her son as she chooses?”

“He is a very obedient and dutiful son if he agree so easily as that, to sacrifice his happiness to her wishes.”

“Oh, I guess he won’t die of it!—Oh my, no,—it is not in his nature to be superlative in anything; unless, indeed, it be superlatively indifferent, he might be called the quintessential extract of mediocrity; for a Cuban, he is indeed wonderfully cold and sedate, and I am convinced that he will never go the length of falling in love; so you see that as it happens, it is the best thing in the world for him, that he has an amiable mother to arrange these little matters for him.”

“Not capable of falling in love! Why, you should have seen him yesterday at the Morro Castle, flirting away with that piquante countrywoman of yours, Miss de Fison.”

“Flirting! Oh, I dare say, flirting! I guess any fool can do *that*,—but is it possible, Lord Carlton, that you should be so very innocent as to mistake a senseless flirtation for love? Don’t you know that it is the fashion for young people, between the ages of fifteen and thirty, to vow eternal love and constancy to each other, to spoon away in shady walks and corridors, and to dance to the ever-delightful strains of Strauss, without feeling the slightest love for each other all the while?”

“The world is so full of love, is it not?” If Sir George Leigh had not “fallen in love” with Lilian Robinson (who by the way so very nearly became Lilian Johnstone the year before she awakened the young baronet’s susceptibilities),

would he not, in all probability—as Lilian so often has told me—have succumbed to the high rank and desirable family connections of Lady Isabella Fitzmaurice, the proud but poor and ugly daughter of the noble Marquis of Belgrade? And yet, don't we both know at least a dozen men who would have made Lilian quite as happy, have suited her not very original temperament just as well as Sir George—had they been baronets, of course? And on the other hand, would not that great, but easy-going man, the Count de Guanabacoa (whose horses and whiskers, in the midst of the agonies of courtship, never lost their due share of his daily attention), have been sure to meet some equally dear 'dearest little woman in the world,' if he had not, by the most romantic accident, happened to save his Catalina one day from the jaws of her mother's infuriated little Havana dog? Even for such a very exceptional nature as that of Horace Ulyses Talboys, Esq., "which towers above the petty race of men" (we will take his word for it), is there not a sufficiency of romantic damsels, any one of whom will, with tear-laden eye, listen enthralled to his mystic lays, swallowing sympathetically any quantity of lisping despair, and ethereally regardless of defects in rhythm, rhyme, and reason? And yet, I doubt very much if even Mr Talboys himself, who is 'all heart,' would waste his precious time in making sonnets to Miss de Fison, if he

did not know what a profitable business her father's is. Men and women are the greatest imitators in the world, and those who pretend to despise the conventionalities of this world, are the very first to 'fall in love,' or at least pretend to do so, because it is the O.-K.-thing to do, as we say across the water ; and every one *must* 'fall in love' who has any pretensions to a 'soul' or a 'heart.'

"I must confess, Mrs Herbert," I said, when she had finished, "that you are quite right ; yet love does exist in the world, and is not limited to the republic of letters, as some will have it ; love is a real existing thing, and a very noble passion, but the imitative, 'pumped-up' emotion, which I am afraid generally does duty for it, is but a base deceitful thing, which indicates a very low standard of mind ; for while we flirt we know very well that we could do nothing more unkind, more dangerous, more unfair to each other and to ourselves, and often dispel true love by its frivolities."

"I do not see all those evils, allow me to remark," said Mrs Herbert, rising from the breakfast table, and taking a seat closer to mine, with the little monkey on her shoulder ; who even in this warm tropical climate shivered with cold, while the offended parrot went off in disgust, and perched itself on the top of the looking-glass, from which elevated position it looked wiser than ever,—“I

cannot say that I see all those evils, allow me to remark ; I am not a flirt, God knows, my age for flirting having^a long gone by, so that you may tell me all about it."

"Flirting should be the most charming, evanescent imitation of love," I said, "without the slightest tincture of truth in it on either side. But how seldom is it so? The essence of true flirting is its unreality, and yet how often in the pleasures of flirting do we not almost forget that neither of us is one bit in love with the other? With man or woman the illicit flirtation often remains for years the little sting that spoils the happiest present. The sweet recollection of those spooney hours passed by the side of Olivia, how often do they not cool down the joy of the husband who presses his wife daily to his heart? And Olivia, on her side, married to an honest man, who loves her better than life, whom with very little trouble on her part, she could respect and love, how often she sighs at the memory of the other's curly moustache, and tender, meaningless words, which she foolishly had taken for compliments to herself, and looked at him smilingly in consequence ; (admiring his pluck or his manly stature, the coxcomb thought, on his side); and yet, if he had actually loved her, if she could ever have really cared for him, if a thousand things had happened that never did, nor could—well, she might perhaps have been *almost* as happy

with him as she is now with her doating husband."

"Well, perhaps you are right, Lord Carlton, but you are too real, too earnest in your view of life; and your words, true as they no doubt are, cut human nature to the heart. These highly-civilised and over-polished times of ours, are so superficial; people now-a-days are not fond of deep or earnest feelings, and though they may be penetrated with a half sense of the worthlessness of life and things in general, yet they do not feel at all disposed to give them up—men therefore may be satirical, but only to a certain extent—and thus you will never find them bitter enough to be mocking—never amiable enough to remain silent, nor yet sincere enough to say exactly what they think; their true feelings are in this way always disguised, and all we see of them is but the outward mask which society forces them to assume. You, I repeat, are too true, too real, too much in earnest. Men like to laugh at the shortcomings of others, and condemn their vices, but only playfully, not severely, so that they may be taken up again uninjured at any moment, if it be found convenient.

But returning to our young friend, the Duke de Miranda. I certainly wish, between ourselves, that flirting with Miss de Fison were the worst thing that might be said of him.

Mrs Herbert said this in a tone which implied that her wish was but a strong figure of speech.

I, however, paid but little attention to it, for I was at the time too engrossed with my own thoughts to think of other people. "I wonder," I said to myself almost aloud, "what she will think of this marriage, and Lilian Leigh too, surely it will be a hard blow for *her*."

"A hard blow to Lady Leigh!" exclaimed Mrs Herbert, who had heard my only half-whispered thought. "What! the Duke's marriage? forgive me if I fail to see the sense of your words."

"Why, Mrs Herbert, you do not mean to say that you have been all this time with Lilian Leigh, and yet have not noticed the dead set she has been making for the last few days at the young Duke?"

"Has she indeed? and I have never noticed it? That shows you, Lord Carlton, how little I trouble myself about people's flirtations, but I always thought—in fact, it is the current opinion here—that she is setting her cap at you, Lord Carlton, or rather, that you are over head and ears in love with her, which is considered much more probable."

"Indeed! Now, do I look head and ears in love with anyone? do I write mad poetry, and go about unshaved? do I serenade the windows of the bewitching widow? do I spoon away at night with her through the corridors, as our friend, the Portuguese consul is supposed to do?"

"Not that I know of, and yet, everybody has it that you are in love. You see you are such a mystery to us all—you will excuse me for saying so, won't

you ?” Accepting the question as a mere bit of rhetorical effect, I thought it superfluous to reply ; and it was lucky that I did not attempt to do so, for, after a very short pause, she went on as if she had never expected me to say anything. “ You are such a mystery, you know. You never seem to take an interest in anything, you invariably refuse all invitations, even to the opera you decline going ; and some people go so far as to say that you never sleep at night, but sit up talking to yourself until daybreak, and often you have been seen wandering about the suburbs in the middle of the day, running the risk of getting a sunstroke, whilst other people are sensibly taking their *siesta*. It is only natural, seeing all these strange customs, that the world should come to the conclusion that you must be in love, and as you came with Lady Leigh, what more probable than that you should be in love with her ? she is beautiful, young, a widow, rich, with a title ; you must expect people to talk if you give them such strong reasons for doing so, and let me tell you, that the Havana is not a paradise where scandal is unknown.”

I shuddered as I heard this ; I looked at Mrs Herbert in speechless dismay, and I felt my colour coming and going as she spoke, when her last words reached my ears. I saw in the glass opposite that my changing colour had finally settled into an angry red. Was it possible that my conduct could be interpreted in this way ? was it

possible that I should be taken for such a fool ? and yet there was nothing foolish in it, nothing wrong, still nothing that I could contradict ; and this aggravated me more than anything, it was indeed only too probable that I should have fallen in love with the charming young widow who had come with me to the Island ; and at whose side I might be seen every afternoon in the promenade, or at the opera ; and yet, how very different were my feelings towards her. How could I love her, *I* who had the love of an angel ! But how could I explain all this ? Say what I would, my conduct would always remain strangely mysterious, and all that I should gain, would be to be considered more of a madman or a fool than ever.

“ You are doing me a great wrong, Mrs Herbert,” I exclaimed, when I could master my voice. “ It is a shame to say that I am in love with Lady Leigh, or that she is in love with me. It is true that our having travelled together might be considered strange *here*, but surely not by you, an American, and accustomed to American manners. I cannot help admiring Lady Leigh, but that is all. I entertain no other feeling for her ; and if I did, Mrs Herbert, you may be sure that I would not remain under the same roof with her another night.”

I was bowing to her, and on the point of taking my leave, when General Herbert made his appearance.

“Good morning, my lord,” he said, “are you going to Puentes Grandes this afternoon?”

“No.”

“I made sure you would. Lady Leigh is going.”

“Indeed!” as I said this my eyes chanced to meet those of Mrs Herbert, and I saw in them an amused expression, which to me was most significant. “The Duke of Miranda is going,” I added hurriedly, “*he* will be enough to amuse her,” and I left the room. But no sooner was I in the passage, than I repented my rash words. “Fool that I am,” I exclaimed, “he will think I am jealous of the Duke, and before to-morrow night the news will have gone the round of the town—won’t they laugh at my expense now!”

II.

“ These are the spiders of society ;
They weave their petty webs of lies and sneers,
And lie themselves in ambush for the spoil.
The web seems fair, and glitters in the sun.
And the poor victim winds him in the toil,
Before he dreams of danger or of death.”

L. E. LANDON.

I WENT back to my room as displeased with myself as any man could possibly be. “Conchita is right,” I exclaimed, throwing myself into a rocking chair, “there can be ‘no happiness in this world;’ whatever you do, ’tis sure to be thought wrong by, at least nine out of ten of the people of the world. I believe I am so far from growing fond of society by living in it, that my natural dislike to it does but increase every day. Even the friends I think I like the best, bore me after a time. I suppose they would like everybody to be like themselves in this world of theirs, everybody drawn after the same pattern, thinking and acting alike. Oh ! I hate it all . . . if it were not for my angel wife I think I should put an end to my existence, but that would be a crime which would separate us. As she says I have a work allotted to me, and I must go through with it whether I like it or not, and remain in this silly nonsensical

world until it pleases God to take me away to that bright sphere where my Conchita dwells. But I literally seem to have murdered a man whose name was *Ennui*, for his ghost is ever before me. They say there is no English word for *Ennui*. I should translate it *society*, and I believe most people would agree with me."

As I said this my eyes chanced to rest on the *Diario de la Marina*, which lay on the table. I took it up again.

"I wonder how much that young lady with the long name has paid for having her approaching marriage advertised in the newspapers? For another of the weaknesses of society is, that every thing it does must be done to the sound of trumpets, and announced to the uninitiated in the morning papers. Why, I believe one-half of the entertainments in London are given, not from any desire on the part of the hosts to entertain their friends, but in order that the world at large may learn, through the sacred pages of the *Morning Post*, that the Duke of this, and the Marchioness of that, keep up their reputation for hospitality; or that *nobodies* got *somebodies* to go to their houses, or have, after a severe struggle, succeeded in gaining admittance within the corridors of what is called *the great world*." As my thoughts reached this point, I saw clearly before me my own name. "What can they possibly say about *me*?" I said, "Surely they are very generous in Cuba to

put notices in the papers about people without being paid for them;—and God knows I have never spent a single cent in having my doings advertised.” I took up the *Diario*, and to my utter astonishment and dismay I read the following little paragraph:—

“*Lord Carlton and Lady Leigh are still staying at the St Carlos Hotel.*”

“What!” I exclaimed, “even in the daily papers are our names to be coupled together!” I threw down the newspaper in a transport of rage (like a fool), and then took it up again (like a sensible man), and read it over again to see that my eyes had not deceived me. No, there it was—short and sweet, but bitter, very bitter to me—for I could not help seeing the deep meaning that lay concealed in those few words.

“This must not be; a stop must be put to this, and at once; her honour and mine are concerned in it.” And the words she had uttered the night of the ball on board the “*Numancia*” returned to my mind in all their significance. “You compromise me you, Carlton, are the one the world points to. Perhaps you are dangerous without knowing it, or society has discovered in you a power ignored by your modesty. I know not. Even my enemies find it natural that those men you speak of should talk with me, dance with me. It is true, none of them have ever *travelled with me or lived under the same roof with me!*” She was right, and I,

fool that I was, took her words simply to mean this, "when are you going to propose to me?" Yes, she was right—only too right, alas! I compromised her, and I compromised myself, and insensible that I have been, I still compromise her and myself too; why did I not leave with my friend Halsey! why, oh why, did I not go away from her as I intended. I should have been in Peru before this, away from this place; too far for even its scandal to reach me Conchita. Alas! alas! it was she who kept me, she who changed my plans; I forgot everything when I saw her standing before me in all her angelic beauty, more beautiful even than when alive and yet, she is a free spirit, she would have accompanied me anywhere but now it is too late too late, the worst has come!"

A sharp sound reached my ear which made me start from my seat; it was the railway whistle. "The railway! the railway ha, yes! There is a way yet the railway will soon bear me away from here, and to-morrow morning all the Cubans will learn that Lord Carlton has left the Havana. I will be vulgar and snobbish enough to put a paragraph in the paper about myself for once in my life."

And taking a pen, I hastily wrote on a piece of paper the following words:

"We learn that Lord Carlton has left the Hotel St Carlos and has gone to"

“Where?” I buried my face in my hands, and was for one moment lost in thought. “Matanzas? That is another large town, and my movements will be as much criticised there as here; no, Matanzas won’t do.” Suddenly a name was put into my head; was it Conchita who had suggested it? I could not tell, it seemed to come naturally to my mind, and yet, why had I not thought of it before? “Guanabacoa—yes, in that little country town I shall be safe and at liberty to see and converse with my Conchita as often as I like, for I cannot leave this beautiful island yet and return to snow and ice in the go-ahead and matter-of-fact United States,” no, I would go to Guanabacoa, the rail would take me there in less than an hour, and all might yet be mended.

And taking up the pen again, I added the word “Guanabacoa” to my little journalistic composition, and rang the bell.

A servant appeared. “Manuel,” I said, “take this to the office of the *Diario de la Marina*, and say that I want it to appear in their first edition to-morrow, and in a conspicuous place. I will pay for it, of course.”

“Yes, my Lord.”

And the door shut behind him. A weight seemed to have fallen from my shoulders—I felt once more free.

I called my valet, and told him to pack all

my things as quickly as he could. As I was helping him, a thought came into my mind—"ought I to go away like this without seeing Lilian Leigh? No, I must explain to her why I go—why I feel compelled to leave her."

I sent my man to her room to inquire if I could see her; he soon returned with an affirmative answer.

I went to her room, and I must confess that I felt nervous as I entered it, in spite of my habitual self-possession. I found her sitting in a rocking-chair by the window, which, like mine, overlooked the bay; on her lap was the *Diario de la Marina* (accursed *Diario de la Marina*!), and as I glanced over it I could see that it was opened at that page where the Duke de Miranda's marriage was announced; she had evidently just read it.

"I come to say good-bye to you—I am off by the first train."

My words seemed to arouse her from a reverie, and yet she must have expected me. She looked up with a wearied expression in her beautiful violet eyes. "I come to bid you good-bye," I said again.

"Are you going away?"

"Yes. Do you remember the conversation we had at the ball of the Numancia?"

She started and her eyes glanced at me.

"Forgive me if I awake painful recollections,"

I added, seeing the disagreeable effect my words had upon her. "But I have come to the same conclusion to which you, being wiser than I, arrived long ago. I compromise you ; I feel it ; I know it ; and I have decided on going. While I remain near you, people *will* talk, scandals *will* arise, even if we give no excuse for them. There is in society a large class of supercilious people (*supersilly* they should be called) who think it necessary in order to keep up their respectability to find *something* wrong in the actions of their neighbours, for otherwise in what could they be considered better than others ? We have both fallen victims to these people ; your doings and mine seem to be a sore point with them, and do what we will, they are determined to pick us both to pieces ; you understand me, Lilian, don't you ? We have now been acquainted too long not to understand one another, and I am sure you will forgive me if I speak plainly to you for once."

I then showed her the paragraph which had disturbed me so much.

"You see," I said, "how our names are coupled together. We know that we have never entertained any feelings for each other except those of friendship ; but don't you think that most people who read this and see us day after day together at parties, promenades, and theatres, will most likely think differently, and that perhaps thoughts will arise in their minds which never arose in ours ?"

“Lord Carlton! when have I given you a right to speak thus to me? I will never speak another word to you as long as I live!”—a woman’s favourite threat in moments of extremity, and generally the prelude to a torrent of words, and knowing this, I said, to prevent them if possible—

“Forgive me and let us once more be friends. I, for my part, am ready to do anything for you which I think necessary for your happiness. God knows how innocent has been our intercourse, yet the world *will* not think so, and there are plenty of people in this city whose interest would seem to lay in *somebody* (who shall be nameless) thinking us guilty of a passion we *have* never, and *shall* never feel. Nay, Lilian, you need not look surprised; it is only natural that the Countess de Guanabacoa, who, no doubt, is a true friend of yours, should prefer supporting the cause of her niece, Doña Filomena at all hazards. . . . you understand me now? If it were only on this account I think it would be my duty in my present position to quit the Havana, for I know I shall only be in your way while I remain at this hotel.”

She still reclined in the arm-chair, pale, mute, and agitated, her beautiful velvet cheeks were colourless, her lips were pale although she had bitten them with her little teeth till the blood came. I went up to her and took her hand in mine.

“Forgive me!” I said again. “Forgive me if

I have offended you ; forgive me, Lilian. Let us part friends !”

“What must you think of me to speak like this !” was all she could say at that moment.

“That you are the most fascinating woman I have ever met, the most beautiful, the most attractive, and that I would certainly have been the first to have fallen at your feet if it had not been for my Conchita.”

“Conchita—who is she ?”

“My wife !”

“Your wife—is she alive then ?”

“Never enquire into this mystery. You would think me a madman if I attempted to explain it to you ; let it be enough for you to know that I can never love another in this world. And now, farewell, Lilian, farewell !”

She let me take her hand in mine ; it felt as cold as marble and it did not respond to my pressure. I left the room in silence, and as I crossed the threshold I felt a soft warm kiss upon my brow, and I knew I was not alone.

That afternoon I left the Havana by the railway, and two hours afterwards I was comfortably settled in a little apartment at Guanabacoa which I had hired for a few weeks, there being no good hotel in the place.

III.

“Bear me, some god! oh, quickly bear me hence
To wholesome solitude, the nurse of sense,
Where contemplation plumes her ruffled wings,
And the free soul looks down to pity kings.”

POPE.

GUANABACOA is a little town on the eastern side of the bay of the Havana; and it is reached from that town by crossing the bay in one of the ferry-steamers running every five minutes from almost the very door of the Hotel St Carlos to the large village of Regla, on the opposite shore, where all the sugar warehouses are; and hence by rail direct to Guanabacoa.

This is a quaint, old town, one of the oldest in the whole Island, and from which the Count de Guanabacoa derives his title. Originally it was an Indian village, but in 1554 the wandering natives were collected from all the country around and formed into a great tribe, which settlement in 1743 was thought worthy of being called a town, and give its name to a Count.

There is nothing whatever worth seeing in this little place, which I suppose is the reason that so few strangers ever come to it; but I was not sorry

for this. I had come in search of solitude and quiet, and the idea of fixing myself in this antiquated "slow" place delighted me.

There are two "*Fondas*," one situated opposite the railway station, and another in the centre of the town in the Plaza, where I was told that a military band played at night, but neither of them suited me; so I was on the point of driving back again to the station to catch the cars back to the city, and seek fortune elsewhere, when a fat, rosy-cheeked, good-natured woman stopped me, and offered me a couple of rooms in her house, where she said I might also board. The offer was very tempting, as, to say the truth, I was loth to leave this old town so soon; so I accompanied her across the Plaza and by the old Cathedral—passing which she devoutly crossed herself—to a quiet street some little way from the town, where at last she stopped in front of a small house overlooking some green fields.

It was a new house, as its bright unfaded Venetian blinds attested from a distance, and formed part of a large block of semi-detached villas, as they would be called in England, which some speculating Yankee had built up to be let during the summer months to the inhabitants of the Havana; who seek in the smaller towns around the capital the cooler air of the country, accompanied with the advantages of a town.

A wide verandah surrounded it, which also

served as entrance-hall, and out of which the rooms of the first, and only floor of the building opened. These were spacious and well-aired, and, in spite of the scanty articles of furniture which decorated them, presented enough of comfort to tempt me to retain two of them, one of which I turned into a sitting-room, and the other into a bed-room.

After seeing after all these little comforts, and agreeing to the price, which I was bound to confess moderate enough ; I partook of some dinner which my good-natured landlady took a special delight in serving me herself, and it being by this time already quite dark, I retired to my room, expecting that my angel-wife would not be long in coming to me. But that night, I was, however, destined to wait for her in vain. I hardly knew whether I had displeased her, or whether the change of locality had anything to do with it, but she never made her appearance the whole night long, although I sat up patiently waiting for her until an advanced hour of the night, when, convinced she would not come, I at last made up my mind to retire to my bed.

The whole of the next day passed for me like a dream ; I hardly seemed to realise my own existence. Had Conchita forgotten me ? Had I forfeited her love ? Had I displeased her by leaving the Havana ? were the questions I put to myself all through the day, and my inability

to answer them rendered me most unhappy, until the next night at last arrived, and with it my beloved angel-wife, who, with one of her celestial smiles, made me at once forget all the heart-rending anxiety I had gone through.

NIGHT THE ELEVENTH.



“ Though thy slumber may be deep,
Yet thy spirit shall not sleep ;
There are shades which will not vanish,
There are thoughts thou can’st not banish ;
By a power to thee unknown,
Thou can’st never be alone.”

LORD BYRON.

I.

“Patience and patience! Hence that word was made
For brutes of burden, not for birds of prey;
Preach it to mortals of a dust like thine,
I am not of thine order, thanks to heaven!”

LORD BYRON.

“CONCHITA, Conchita,” I exclaimed, as soon as I perceived her heavenly form gently gliding down towards me from the blue sky above. “I have been so lonely without thee, why, oh why! didst thou not come to me last night? Thou knowest that my only happiness is to have thee near me.”

She softly bent over me and her pure lips rested upon mine.

“Thou lovest me too much, Walter,” she whispered. “Oh!” she added after a short pause, “that I should ever have to accuse you of such a thing! and yet—happy—ah, too happy, does it render me! Yet I know that it is wrong to allow our passions, pure as they may be, to carry us to such an extent away from ourselves. Walter, you live too much in me, too little in yourself, and this is why I did not come to you last evening, though I can assure you that I felt our temporary separation quite as much as you did yourself.”

Walter. “What do your dreadful words mean?

Have you ceased to love me? Oh, no, no. Your sweet smile reassures me. Your looks tell me that you still love me. Can our love perchance be wicked? Can a love that has conquered death and outlasted life itself, be impure? Oh no, surely not that!"

Conchita. "I love thee, Walter! I love thee more than ever, and our love is not wicked. Can a passion that comes direct from God Himself ever be wicked or impure? Ah no, you mistake my meaning, you misrepresent my words, our love is true and good, but it may be fatal to you. Ah, that is what I feared! that is what I felt the first time I appeared to you after my death. You belong still to the world, and I am a free spirit, you are a man, I am a woman no longer. Thy love, therefore, is out of place; our heart is where we love, and thy heart should be on the earth, not away from it as thine is. Oh I was wrong ever to come to thee! God had divided us, and I in my blind passion for thee, fancied, fool that I was, that I might still be thy wife, though death had separated us for a necessary period with its all-conquering spell."

Walter. "But our love has conquered even that spell, death has no power over us now."

Conchita. "Yes, we have conquered death; but what has been the cost of our victory? What can our love bring us? Unhappiness, misery, misfortunes of all kinds."

Walter. "Why speak so, Conchita of my heart? why talk of misery and unhappiness to me who am the happiest, the most fortunate of men? Do I not possess the love of an angel?"

Conchita. "Yes, but that one love costs thee the love of all thy fellow-men; thou wouldst forego all companionship; on the earth where you are bound to live, you will henceforth find no happiness, no peace, no comfort."

Walter. "The world! Can you imagine for a moment that I ever cared for it! Oh, thou misunderstanddest my love, if thou canst place it on the same footing with the super-mundane love I entertain for thee, my angel. People may call me odd, the world may even pronounce me mad. Do you think I care? It is I who have a right to call the world mad. Ah, I wonder whether the conflicts of which my poor brain is the occasional arena, are fiercer than those of others. I wonder whether other people actually think of things beyond the few conventional subjects of polite conversation, for if they do, surely they too must appear to the great majority of perfectly polite people, uncommonly odd! Oh, Conchita, I am tired of the world, I have grown wearied of men and of their selfish, narrow-minded, blind ways, and you ask me to give up your love for *them*!"

Conchita. "You are right in saying that there is nothing so unpardonable in good society as to overstep the borders of the stereotyped conven-

tionalities by which it has surrounded itself, and in which it lives and has its being ; but at the same time, do you not see that you as a man form part of that very society you revolt against ? You came to the world to live in the world, to learn its lessons, to profit by its example ; and instead of that you shut yourself up, fix your heart on a passion outside the world, and make for yourself an existence apart, and foreign to the world you came to inhabit ; this is why I thought proper not to come to you last night, and henceforth I will only visit you occasionally ; for you must try to accomplish your mission upon earth quickly, and profitably, that you may the sooner come to live with me out of the world and its small cares, in a region where we shall be eternally happy."

Walter. "And when will that be ? When shall I at last be free from all earthly ties, free to love thee as my heart would fain wish to do even now ? Shall I have long to wait yet, to see this which is now my only wish, at last accomplished ?"

Conchita. "You should have patience, my Walter, your earthly mission is far from being accomplished yet, but I too well understand your wish to leave the earth ; for who would not, knowing what comes after that transition, called by men death ? And in this I see the all-merciful and ever-provident hand of the Creator, who wisely hides from his children at school, the joys and happiness

of the beautiful home he has prepared for them in heaven. I thought my presence would give you courage, and help you to accomplish your term upon earth ; but I now see how mistaken I was, and how much wiser and foreseeing is the law that prevents the dead from appearing to the ignorant undeveloped brothers of Dives, upon the earth."

Walter. " Oh Conchita, do not let me hear you deplore the kind and heavenly impulse of your loving heart that first made you appear to me after your death, bringing me consolation and happiness. Think that but for you I should never have known while on earth the history of our past ; nor even the great fundamental law of Reincarnation."

Conchita. " You are right, but you are one of the few, ay, I am sorry to say, very few, who, as yet, can comprehend this grand doctrine ; for I too have come to the conclusion, as our holy mother church decided long ago, that men are not as yet ready to receive it ; and that its knowledge, in most cases, would only serve to increase their misery and their unbelief."

Walter. " But I am not one of those, Conchita, for I am able to see all the greatness and justice of this doctrine. But will you not finish the history of your past ? I am so anxious to know all your past actions ; I seem to feel so jealous of

that very past which has made us what we now are? Oh speak, Conchita, speak!"

Conchita. "Well, as I have gone thus far, I do not see why I should not finish the past history of our souls through the ages."

II.

“ Blue, and baseless, and beautiful,
Did the boundless mountains bear
Their folded shadows into the golden air.”

RUSKIN.

As I told you the other night, after my death, as Margaret, in the Tyrol, I wandered for years over the scenes of my last incarnation ; my poor spirit being too material and undeveloped as yet to rise from the earth, and take its place amongst the higher beings of the superior spheres. For years, therefore, I was still destined, if I may so express myself, to haunt the poor cottage, and the limited valley which was then the whole universe known to me. At first, I could hardly realise my spiritual existence ; I knew that some great change had come over me, and I wondered at people taking so little notice of my presence ; until I gradually began to realise the strange fact that I had suddenly become invisible ; and the idea of my being dead never occurred to me until a long time afterwards ; when I saw that gradually the same strange change took place in all my relations and friends. But yet, even then I doubted ; my notions and ideas respecting death had been so very different, that I could hardly

believe my own senses, even when I saw the dead bodies of my friends carried to the cemetery, and buried under the earth, while they themselves continued living as before around me ; and amongst the very relations who wept so bitterly for their loss.

I could not tell you exactly how long I remained in this strange situation, for, as you already know, in space there is no time, and, therefore, I had no possible means of calculating its length. But gradually my sphere of action became larger, and I was able to wander at will, although always close to the earth, which I longed to leave, and never daring to traverse the dense atmosphere which divided me from the higher regions of celestial space.

In my long wanderings over the mountains and plains of the earth, I traversed repeatedly its entire surface ; for, as I have told you already, disembodied spirits are able to travel with the velocity of thought ; but there was one particular spot which had for me an attraction which it would be impossible for me to describe, and over and over again I found myself wandering towards that spot which attracted me as the magnet attracts the needle, by some mysterious and invisible, yet all-powerful attraction.

It was in a country far far away from my native mountains, yet it bore some resemblance to the Tyrol in its wild and strange magnificence,

in its dreary solitude, combined with smiling fertile villages, abounding in all the exquisite beauties of a powerful and virgin vegetation. Yet, if well examined, this new country offered great and contrasting differences to the northern and snow-clad mountains of my native Tyrol, and its stern bleak grandeur, mixed with a prodigious and spontaneous vegetation, revealed the characteristics of a warmer and more southern zone.

What could attract my wandering spirit to these rugged hills which appeared only possible for the haunts of wild animals, and still wilder birds of prey? I could not tell; I did not even think of analyzing my own feelings at the time; for I seemed to live as in a dream, in which I myself exercised but little influence over my own actions, which, indeed, appeared to be governed by an influence more powerful than any I could command.

In the midst of this district there was a castle, which seemed to be the point about which my spirit hovered. It was a grim-looking tower perched upon a naked rock, of which, at a distance, it seemed but to form a peak; it overlooked a deep valley, fertilized by two rich streams, which irrigated it on all sides, and at last emptied themselves into the neighbouring sea not far from an enormous rock, which rose from the waters around it and stretched itself out into the ever blue sea, as if it would reach the higher cliffs of the

opposite coast, which it almost seemed to touch, leaving only passage for the waters.

As I afterwards discovered, this strange fortress, perched upon the top of an almost inaccessible mountain, was a Moorish castle, or rather *atalaya* ; a kind of watch-tower which defended, from its commanding and impregnable position, one of the passes of that high chain of mountains called the *Sierra de Ronda*, which formed one of the natural fortifications around the beautiful, rich, and powerful kingdom of *Granada*. For as you may have already guessed, my dear Walter, it was to Spain and to its most beautiful district, that of fair *Andalucia*, that my spirit was thus powerfully drawn. What the cause of this attraction was, you will easily know.

In that grim, almost inaccessible fortress, lived a youth, one whose smallest actions seemed to have more interest for me than aught else in the whole wide world ; although to my recollection I had never seen him while on the earth. He was a stranger to me, a stranger to Margaret I mean ; and this is why I could not explain the strange sympathy that linked me to his life. But you, dearest husband, who know already the previous existences of my spirit upon the earth, will readily understand the whole mystery, and know at once that he was no other than your own dear self. And, indeed, who else could it have been ? what other being could have exercised such a power

over my heart. Ah, only you, my Walter, only you, whom I had already so loved on the earth and whose love I could not forget, though all knowledge of such an existence had, for the time, been banished from my mind !

Then I knew, for the first time, why I had never been happy while last on the earth ; why I had always sighed for something, for something the nature of which I knew not ; and why I had never loved anyone nor cared for anything. It was *that* inhabitant of this lonely fortress, he whom I actually believed I had never seen before, who possessed my heart, and I could not leave his side ; I could not fly from those prison-like walls, I felt bound as if by a spell to that man who knew not even of my existence ; who was ignorant of my very presence ! Oh that I could but speak to him ! that I could but tell him what I felt for him ! that I could but explain to him the strange nature of my feelings, and the yet more wonderful fact of my presence at his side !

But no, I was invisible to him, and my free spirit could not communicate with his embodied one, for then no tie existed between us as it does now—a tie stronger even than death, as it allows us to be as one, though inhabiting different worlds. No, we were destined never to speak, never to exchange mutual confidences ; though sometimes I fancied that he was not quite unconscious of the invisible presence of one dear to

him, who always at his side, endeavoured to console him in his misery, and encourage him to bear his sad fate.

I say sad fate, and I speak of his misery, for he was indeed greatly to be pitied in spite of his healthy youth and handsome appearance.

In that lordly tower where he lived, and which in one way he seemed to rule as master, he was but a prisoner ; from his birth he had known no other world than those wild mountains ; no other horizon than that blue line of sea on one side, and on the other those green plains which extended as far as the eye could reach. This was his universe, he knew of no other ; and its inhabitants, the only fellow-creatures he had ever known, were a rough though not cruel-hearted Moor, as his strange fierce aspect would have led one to believe ; and a handful of ignorant soldiers, with whom he could have nothing whatever in common.

Another thing which rendered me even more unhappy was his religious education. During my life, as you know, I had been a pious Catholic ; indeed, for my last two earthly careers I had accustomed myself to look upon those who differed from the doctrines I had been taught to regard as the only true ones, as heretics, and for ever damned. You may well imagine my unhappiness, therefore, when I found that the only person I cared about, the one being I loved above all others, was a Mussulman, a Mahom-

medan, a disciple of Mahomet's detested heresy—of that heresy I had been told to look upon as the most dreadful of all; and whose unhappy followers were after death condemned to everlasting perdition.

"Can it be possible," I used to say to myself, "that I am destined never to speak to this man, never to tell him what I feel for him; but that in heaven, as on earth, we are to be for ever divided?" For I naturally supposed that a Mussulman could not possibly after death inhabit the same region with the followers of the true and only God.

This, my dear Walter, which you will naturally consider as an absurd belief in a free spirit, who should know all about the other world, was, however, the cause of my greatest misery; and I believe I suffered more at the mere idea of such an eternal future separation, than at my present inability to communicate with the man I loved.

As time passed, and this—to me all-absorbing fear—took possession of my soul, I thought of the only one means by which I might hope to bring him to my side, if not during life, at least after death. This way, this only way, was that of his conversion to the true faith, which would at once ensure for him that heaven in which one day we might at least meet on equal terms. But how could I convert him? I who was fated never to speak to him? I who exercised so little influence over him?

One day towards dusk, as I pondered on this all-absorbing thought of my spirit, I chanced to notice a man who was toiling up one of the rude ascents that led through the woods towards the castle; he was a stranger to the place, for I had never even seen him before, and as indeed his wondering looks and cautious steps fully betrayed. But what was my surprise and delight, when, on looking more closely at him from my elevated position, I recognised on his breast the holy badge of my faith—the cross of Christ ! Then for the first time I perceived that he was attired in the long simple robes of a monk, so different from the dazzling burnouses and embroidered kaftans of the Moors. But what could a Christian and a monk be doing in the very stronghold of the Moslem domain ?

I cared not ; to my mind it was God Himself who had sent him, in answer to my prayers, as the chosen instrument of Muley Ahmet's conversion, (for this was then thy name) ; and my heart rejoiced at the thought, and I became once more happy and hopeful for the future which awaited me, and which was at last to bring us together.

With that secret and unknown influence which free spirits can sometimes exercise over men, I directed the good old monk's steps through the dense wood, and up the rugged ascent of the mountain to the very platform upon which rose the Moorish watch-tower. Until that moment he

had obeyed my influence, and had lent himself unconsciously to my plans ; but once arrived at the top of the mountain, and when his eyes caught sight of the battlements, and of the silver crescent which surmounted them, he started back, and, breaking the spell, would have run down the hill towards the woods, and thus for ever have defeated my plans ; but that, fortunately for me, some of the soldiers at the gate saw him, and, drawing out their javelins, ran towards him and stopped him just as he was turning to escape the outer bastions.

“A Christian, a Christian dog ! we have captured a Christian,” was shouted on all sides by the ignorant soldiers, who but rarely had any excitement to break the monotony of the dull life they led on the top of those deserted mountains.

“Let me go ! let me go !” in vain exclaimed the poor old man, frightened by their wild cries and drawn javelins and scymitars which flashed in the light of the setting sun. “I am a poor traveller ; I am on my way to Gibraltar, the town lately captured by the Christian king, and where a new monastery has been founded. I am a priest, a man of peace—let me go !”

“A priest—a Christian priest !” shouted the soldiers, brandishing their scymitars in the air. “So much the better ; Allah be praised for our good luck.”

“Do not kill me ; oh, for your own Allah’s

sake, do not kill me. I am unfit to die ; I am not prepared for death ; do not kill me, if ye have any pity in your hearts." And the good old priest devoutly crossed himself, as he invoked the name of his enemies' God—that very God whom he so often had preached against.

" Kill thee ! Oh, no ! Who ever spoke of death ? We are not like you Christian dogs, who tear to pieces all they find, and rob us of our heritage. But thou art our prisoner." Saying which, they drew him with them into the interior of the tower, whose massive doors they passed just as the sun disappeared behind the blue waters of the ocean, whose solitudes no man had as yet dared to explore.

They entered a spacious but rude apartment, in which some inexperienced artist had attempted to imitate the gorgeous decorations peculiar to the Arab architecture ; which so well depicted to their Eastern imaginations the paradise promised by their prophet ; but which, however, in this particular occasion, had more of the ridiculous in them than of the sublime.

In the centre of the large empty apartment blazed a wood-fire which, now that the sun had gone down, was the only light which remained ; and by it, with his back to the door, sat pensive and meditative, as had been his custom of late, Muley Ahmet, the man I loved.

With that ubiquity peculiar to disembodied

spirits, I entered the room, curious to see what would follow ; although the door had been shut as soon as it had given admittance to the soldiers and their prisoner ; the guards apparently fearing that he might try to escape if left alone for one moment. No sooner had they entered the apartment than a shrill penetrating voice was heard coming from the interior of the building across a court-yard, which as if by enchantment dispersed all the soldiers, who one after another left the room. It was the well-known cry of the Muezzin, a man appointed by the Alcayde of the Castle to give notice to the soldiers of the five recurring periods of prayer during the day.

And thus my long and fervent prayers were at last answered and my desire fulfilled. Muley Ahmet was left alone with the Christian monk.

III.

“ The faith that can inspire this gen’rous change
Must be divine—and glows with all its God !
Friendship and constancy, and right and pity,
All these are lessons I had learnt before ;
But this unnatural grandeur of the soul
Is more than mortal, and outreaches virtue ;
It draws, it charms, it binds me to be Christian.”

HILL.

THE priest remained for a short time as if stunned by the strange adventure which had fallen to his lot, and the end of which he dared not think of ; but arming himself with all his Christian fortitude he prepared himself to bear even martyrdom with the patience and the cheerfulness of a saint.

When quite decided as to the course of conduct he should take under the circumstances, he looked up and observed for the first time the silent statuesque form of the young Moor, who had alone remained in the apartment and who seemed to sleep, though his large, almond-shaped, black eyes were open and fixed on the burning logs that lay at his feet.

A strange curiosity crept into the holy man’s heart. With a cautious step he approached the Moor’s side, and convinced that he was actually awake, he inquired in a soft-toned voice whether

he had not heard the cry of the Muezzin, who summoned all true believers to prayer.

Muley Ahmet lifted his pensive eyes quickly to the Goth's face, and rising with one spring, he flung his strong arms round the Christian, and the next moment had him at his feet.

"Mercy, mercy!" screamed the old man, taken unawares by this sudden and unexpected attack. "I meant no insult, noble Moor. Surely thou would'st not harm a poor old man like me!"

The Moor smiled bitterly and turned his face away. "Ye are all alike, men are all alike cowards and tyrants; tyrants and cowards at the same time, one and all. El Zogoybi despises the whole race. He despises them, ay almost as much as he despises himself, accursed by fate, forgotten by fortune, hated by all!"

The monk looked up in astonishment as he heard these strange words and unconsciously murmured, "Is he mad?" but low as it was, the Moor's ear caught the words, and bursting into a loud laugh, he exclaimed—

"Ay, ay, man, thou art right; I am mad, mad to remain here, mad to live at all!"

"What mean those words, my son?" the friar ventured to say, taking courage as he observed the softer and gentler expression which had come over the Moor's face.

"And who art *thou* who darest to ask El Zogoybi the meaning of his words?" And with-

out waiting for an answer, he continued, "Surely my words are my own; surely, if naught else, my thoughts, bitter as they are, are mine, and I alone can command them!"

"Most assuredly, noble Moor."

"Call me not thus. I am not like other men, though my form may resemble theirs. Moors are free, Moors are happy, Moors have a God and a religion. I have none. I was born to suffer and to pine. Ask me no more. I am El Zogoybi" (the unlucky).

"I am a Christian priest, strange youth. I am a monk from the glorious abbey at Seville. My name is Friar Jeronimo, and my calling is to console the afflicted and to offer cure to the sick. May the Almighty Lord, who made us both, Moor and Spaniard, be blest, if I can be of some use to his children even here in this prison where I am for his sake."

"A Christian, a Christian; I have heard of them before. Yes, now I can collect my thoughts, methinks I remember hearing Aben Abdala speak of them; and the soldiers too; they laughed at them; they spoke of them with scorn called them the enemies of God and his prophet—their mortal foes. Ay, yes, it all comes to me now. And thou art a Christian!"

"Yes, I am one of that race thy people despise, hate, and scorn. I am a Christian, and I am proud to proclaim myself one, even here in the

very stronghold of the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Muley Ahmet remained silent for some time, his eyes fixed on the old friar's face, which the red glare of the fire lit up in parts, causing his eyes to sparkle with an almost superhuman light.

"Thou art brave, fellow," he said at last, "but thou knowest not all the hatred thy faith inspires amongst the Arabs."

"I know it but too well; scarcely had I arrived at years of discretion, than my father, a soldier of the cross, was barbarously murdered by the Arabs who had taken possession of the town in which we lived—murdered before my very eyes; my mother basely insulted, my sisters dishonoured, and all our property taken from us; but I had my revenge, yes, my revenge even then!" and the old man's eyes sparkled with a curious light.

"Revenge! revenge!" muttered the Moor. A word without meaning to El Zogoybi's ear; but a word that strikes horror to his very heart. "Proceed, let's hear of thy revenge."

"Ah! mine was a Christian revenge! I went to the governor of the Moors, to the much-dreaded chief of the Abencerrages the great, the powerful El Abbas, he who boasts of his descent from Abraham himself, and I gave myself up to him. 'I am a Christian,' I said, 'and the Moors, thy countrymen, have killed my father, and stolen my sisters and my patrimony; but young as I am I have more

courage than all thy race, I give myself up to thee, kill me if thou wilt, I know that by pretending to become a Mohammedan I may preserve my property and perhaps recover my sisters ; but I will not ; thy cruelty and thy power only make me prouder of the name of Christian, and I would not change it for life itself. Now, kill me if thou wilt, but confess that there is not a Moor in all Spain who would have the courage, if in my place, to act as I act.' Oh, I was duly revenged, I humbled the priest of the great Abencerrages, he could not answer my words. I was revenged, and I felt prouder at that moment than them all, for I enjoyed a pleasure which Christians can alone enjoy."

El Zogoybi remained pensive for some time ; while Father Jeronimo, lost in the terrible recollections which the scene he had recounted brought back to his mind, almost forgot his present danger. At last the Moor rose from his seat, and drawing himself up to his full height, he placed his right hand on the Monk's shoulder. The Goth started as if awakened from a dream, and anxiously looked up at the young man.

"Thy revenge pleases me," said he. "It is new, and worthy of a man. Oh ! but that El Zogoybi could also be a man !"

"My son," exclaimed the Goth, moved by the Moor's sorrowful voice ; "Thy sorrows seem to be great, would that I could administer consolation

to thy soul ; but thou wouldst despise the friendship of a Christian ! ”

“ Thou knowest me not. If there is one thing I like in thee it is thy being a Christian. I hate the Moors so much, that to be their enemy is enough for thee to be my friend.”

“ Thy words are bitter, young man, it is wrong to hate one’s fellow creatures, thou beginnest badly if thou wantest to become a Christian. Hatred would never make a good Catholic.”

“ Christian, you know me not. I am El Zogoybi, I am the most unlucky, the most miserable being in existence, if indeed I am a being at all ! ”

“ Tell me *all*, noble Moor, unburden thy heart into mine, which is already bleeding for thee ; who art thou ? ”

“ El Zogoybi.”

“ Is that indeed thy name, unlucky man ? ”

“ Men call me Muley Ahmet, but that is the name of a man, and I am not one. Aben Abdala, the Alcayde of this tower, is my guardian, my master, my slave, my tutor, my friend, my enemy ; I know not what, everything and nothing ; this tower is my world, the soldiers thou hast seen not long since my only companions, I knew no others until I saw thee, nor cared to know ; but now the thirst for knowledge burns in my heart, and a new world and a new existence begin for me. Knowest thou the world ? I mean the world beyond the blue sea, where the sun disappears

daily, and remains through the night. Aben Abdala tells me there is nothing beyond, nothing whatever outside this tower, no other men but those who inhabit it; but thou hast come to give the lie to his words, if thou comest truly from beyond, and if thou art indeed a man."

"Strange! strange!" muttered the old man, "wert thou born in this tower then, that thou knowest of naught beyond?"

"Born! born in this tower? Thy words become once more meaningless to my ear."

"Yet thou hadst heard of the Christians?"

"The Christians! Yes, the soldiers speak of them, but only to abuse them. Aben Abdala tells me they are only myths, demons who haunt their brains, and of which they dream at night."

"Thou seest one before thee, however..."

"And in the shape of a man true . . . true again. But they come we shall never meet again, I feel it, I know it; fare thee well, and pray for me to thy God; I cannot pray, I know no God."

The quick ear of the Moor had caught the distant steps of the soldiers, who, having finished their evening prayer, now once more entered the apartment.

Amongst them came the Alcayde, or governor of the place, whose handsome turban and more costly armour would have betrayed him as a person of no common order, if his noble carriage and

open intellectual forehead had not, in any attire, revealed him as a noble and a chief. In the quiet, courteous, and almost gallant way the noble Moors always addressed even their own slaves, he approached the Christian priest, and enquired how he had come to the tower.

“Noble and powerful son of the prophet,” said Friar Jeronimo, “I am a monk from Seville, and was on my way to our new monastery at Gibraltar, when, losing my way in the mountains, I unfortunately mistook my course, and entered the territory of Granada’s Moslem king. I did not perceive my mistake however, until I had reached this tower, the only inhabited spot I have found these two days. I hope, now I have explained my presence in this thy castle, thou wilt generously let me once more depart in peace.”

The Alcaide answered not for some time, nor indeed seemed to have heard his explanations, for his eyes had been fixed all the time on Muley Ahmet, who, seated once more by the fire, seemed to be an utter stranger to the proceedings. “By the treaty which exists between the Christian monarch and our own king,” he said, when he at last noticed that the Christian had finished speaking, “I should, as thou sayest, let thee return once more in peace and uninjured, to thine own country, and indeed I have no power to retain thee here as my prisoner, since the war between our respective kings is at an end ; yet I cannot let thee go just

now, certain state reasons prevent me from so doing, which reasons I have no power to reveal, and to solve which I must immediately despatch a messenger to our capital, Granada: this messenger will bring me instructions. Until his return, Christian, thou remainest here as my guest; the treaty of peace prevents me from keeping thee as a prisoner." And calling to the soldiers, he ordered them to conduct him to a tower, which he had previously caused to be prepared for him, and remained alone with Muley Ahmet.

"My son," he said, approaching the youth, "Did you converse with that man while we were at prayer?"

"I know not how to lie, Alcayde; I did."

"This is what I dreaded, my worst fears have been realised," he muttered to himself, and then added aloud, "Why call me always Alcayde, after the long years we have spent together? am I to thee still only the Alcayde of this castle, never anything dearer to thy heart?"

"Art thou not my jailor, my keeper; can I call thee aught but Alcayde?"

"Thy jailor! thy keeper! why shouldst thou speak thus, Muley Ahmet?"

"Call me not thus; I am El Zogoybi, and know no other name."

"Still that folly! why shouldst thou call thyself the unlucky? Thou art not more unlucky than other men."

“I am a prisoner.”

“A prisoner?”

“Yes, as much a prisoner as any of thy slaves, Alcayde, for *I know* that there exists a world beyond the sea, a world where men live, and that this tower is but a grave where thou would'st fain bury me before death.”

“Such language!” exclaimed the governor, twisting his hands in mute agony.

“Is the language of reason; let me go; let me see for myself. You have yourself spoken of a king—a capital—Granada, what are they? Nay, answer me not, for I can no longer trust thy words. Let me see them, they exist—where? let me go to them! Let me go, I say.”

The Alcayde answered not, but with a hurried step he left the apartment, and retired to his own portion of the tower, while the young Moor, bursting into a wild laugh, also retired to his private rooms across the court-yard.

IV.

“Not always wealth, nor always force,
A splendid destiny commands ;
The lordly vulture gnaws the corse
That rots upon yon barren sands.”

THE IMAN BEN IDRIS.

“THERE is no other God but Allah, and Mahomet is His sole prophet, His will be done!” exclaimed the Alcayde Aben Abdala, as he sank on one of the silken divans which surrounded his chamber ; a smaller one, but richer and much more elegant both in its decorations and furniture than the great entrance-hall which we have just quitted.

He was a handsome man, though cares and hardships had left deep impressions on his broad noble countenance, which was half-hidden beneath a long flowing beard, silvered by the snow of nearly seventy winters.

“Allah alone is great, His will be done ! I have ended my task now ; in spite of all my endeavours, in spite of all my cares and sleepless nights and watchful days, I have not been able to preserve my charge ignorant of the world around him—a stranger to all creation ! What has happened this day was destined to take place : in

spite of its solitude and its concealment, this tower has at last been approached by a stranger ; and what has happened to-day may again happen to-morrow, and every other day, for it is madness for man to try and alter the decrees of the Lord of Hosts, He who alone conquers, He who alone can plan."

With a half-unconscious movement the Moor passed the back of his hand over his face, as if he would gladly forget the inevitable past, and in a more decided, yet almost as resigned a voice, he continued—"I was going to despatch a messenger to the King to let him know what has happened, but upon due reflection, I shall go myself to Granada, and confess to Mohamed my inability to preserve the Prince any longer in the state of ignorance, and yet of happiness, in which he commanded me I should preserve him. I dare say in his wide dominions, on some mountain or crag as yet untrod, Granada's monarch might discover some frowning fortress, or some secluded keep, in which to preserve Muley Ahmet from the eyes of the world ; but it baffles even *his* power, *his* desire, to preserve him from Allah's all-piercing eyes. His fate has been decided in the councils of the most High, and Allah has sealed his doom."

The noble Moor clapped his hands, and at the call a slave entered the chamber, bowing reverently to the ground before his lord.

"Give orders, faithful Kassim, that a horse be prepared for me to-morrow at break of day, and that my escort be in readiness to accompany me to Granada."

"Thine orders shall be obeyed, Prince."

"And say that I wish every attention to be paid to Muley Ahmet during my absence, and that, if possible, he should be prevented from having intercourse with the Christian who came this evening to the castle."

"Shall this new prisoner be lodged in the western dungeons with the other Christians whom we have had since the late war, great Alcayde?"

"No, not for the present; he is not a prisoner, and I wish you not to consider him as such. As for the Gothic knights of whom thou speakest, we shall keep them until their families have paid the full price agreed upon for their ransom. I wish ye never to speak of them to my godson, and never to let him even suspect their vicinity. And now, leave me, Kassim, I need rest before my long journey, I am no longer the young Abden Abdala who knew not what fatigue and cares were, while he fought the holy wars of his prophet."

The slave bowed and disappeared, and the master, with a sigh which seemed unnatural to that yet strong and powerful man, retired to his couch, and was soon lost in deep and absorbing

meditations which kept him awake for long hours before that great restorer, sleep, came at last to procure him the rest he desired, and which was so necessary to him.

The next morning by break of day he mounted his small but handsome horse, a milk-white Arab of the purest breed, who had carried the brave Moor to many a battle-field against the Christians, and had more than once saved his life by its great speed, which no northern charger, however powerful it might have been, could ever have equalled."

My curiosity to know the great secret of Muley Ahmet's imprisonment had increased to the utmost pitch, everything about him wore such a strange appearance, and his very existence seemed such a mystery, that I decided to follow Aben Abdala on his voyage to Granada, as being the only possible way by which I might hope to solve the enigma, and learn the mystery of his birth, and the strange reason which had consigned him to that lonely mountain home. I also wished to see for myself the great Moorish metropolis, whose beauties and wonders I had often heard the soldiers praise and discuss with a pride and delight only equalled by their hopes of the indescribable paradise they so firmly believed Mahomet had prepared for them in Heaven. I knew that I left Muley Ahmet in safety, and that Friar Jeronimo would not fail to preach to him as often as he

could, the consoling and beautiful doctrines of our Saviour, those doctrines which alone would be able to unite us one day, and with the power and facility of a free spirit, I followed the Alcayde step by step, on his journey to Granada.

V.

“ Nace el Genil en la sierra ;
El Darro entre montes nace ;
De los dos en medio yace,
Aruinada, una Ciudad.
Mas son tales sus ruinas,
Tan gigantesco su esqueleto
Que aun se alza con respeto
Lo que fué en la antigüedad.
Diez años contra sus muros
Bramó el poder de Castilla ;
Sola, aislada, sin mancilla
Sus combates rechazó ;
Y si cristianos corrieron
Arrogantes la frontera
Ay ! su huella pasagera
Sobre sangre resbaló !

FERNANDEZ Y GONZALES.

SHALL I ever forget the hour I first beheld Granada? The hour my wondering spirit eyes first looked upon that paradise of beauty and love, where man has tried to rival with God in accumulating in one small spot all that is beautiful to the eyes, dear to the memory, love-inspiring to the heart, gorgeous to the imagination?

In Andalucia, the only province of Western Europe which the children of the sun ever cared to make their home, and in its most beautiful spot, surrounded by almost impenetrable sierras,

and contained in an immense Vega, rich and almost tropical in its varied vegetation, whose constant fertility and matchless beauty had been cultivated and increased by one race after another, of hard-working and learned husbandmen; Granada, the capital of a great and mighty empire, rose with its glittering edifices, splendid palaces, gorgeous mosques, and surmounted by its numerous light graceful domes, spires, and minarets, in the building and erection of which neither expense nor time had been spared; and on the adornment of which the wealth of two continents and the arts of many different nations had been lavishly employed. Granada, I say, rose and almost dazzled the eye which it burst upon suddenly in all its untold and inconceivable charm.

Surrounded on all sides by groves of fragrant beauty, and defended by countless towers and battlemented walls; vast and frowning, dark and forbidding on the exterior, but suddenly opening upon all the interior beauty, art, and refined luxury, of a city whose pomp and riches seemed almost too dazzling for Europe, too gorgeous and too grand for the earth.

On a hill which rises above the town, as the town itself rises above the plain, stands the far-famed Alhambra, whose castellated walls and massive red towers are reflected in the crystal-like waters of two rivers, whose very sands are said

to be mixed with gold. The sight of this immense pile, associated as it is with the memory of the adventurous heroism, the strange romantic tales of love, the triumphant and glorious career of the nation who erected it, and its sad premature fate, impresses the soul of the stranger, even to this day, with deep and mournful feelings as he contemplates the now mouldering towers, and the deserted halls, which, at a time when the rest of the world was lost in comparative barbarism, contained a court surrounded by all the luxuries of taste, art, and refinement which centuries of continual progress and study have not yet enabled us even to imitate.

And yet the empire of the Spanish Moors was but a brilliant exotic after all, that could take no permanent root in the soil it embellished. Divided from their brothers of the East by deep seas and wide deserts, and severed from their neighbours of the West by manners, customs, education, and faith, they were an isolated nation ; a fresh beautiful oasis in a desert of burning ignorance and savageness ; and their history could only be, after all, a prolonged though gallant and chivalric struggle for a foothold in an usurped land amidst an unfaithful and an ungrateful population.

And yet how many great and heroic events have not those short eight centuries left behind them for posterity to wonder at and admire? And

what a bright, glorious page have not the Moors written in the history of Spain! of Spain who still refuses to acknowledge them, except as invaders and usurpers! But the brave, persevering, gallant courage of the Arab was at last subdued by the mighty power of the Christian cross, and the faithful successors of Pelayo were destined at last to crown the greatest monument of Mahomedan civilisation with the emblem of Christianity.

But in the days I am trying to recall, the virtues of the Castillian Isabel and her brave husband of Aragon, had not yet dawned upon the Christian cause; and the empire of the Crescent, after many a fierce and bloody fight, had at last arrived at its greatest power and influence in its small but beloved kingdom of Granada, the only one left to the Moor in the whole of Spain, but by far the most precious and dear to him of all he possessed.

Aben Abdala entered the capital by the celebrated gate of Elvira, which, but a few years later, was destined to admit the soldiers of the cross; and after traversing the broad square of Vivarambla, and ascending the steep ascent, he crossed the monumental gate of Justice, and entered the sacred precincts of the Alhambra.

In the extensive court-yard where then were situated the great reservoirs, destined in case of a siege to furnish water for the inmates of the royal palace and its forty thousand guards, and where

the vain pride of the Kaiser Karl erected in a later age the colossal unmeaning pile with which he had hoped to rival the art and taste of the nation his grand-mother had conquered, but could not imitate ; he was met by a Moor, a soldier, as his mail and his long scymitar revealed to him, who enquired the object and purpose of his visit.

“I am Aben Abdala,” answered the Moor, “the most humble of my liege’s servants, and the one to whom he has deigned to confer the care of one of his countless castles on the coast. I should like to speak to the king, if thou wouldst kindly lead me immediately to his presence.”

“The son of the prophet is at present in the Sultana’s private apartments, and cannot be disturbed.”

“My mission is one of importance, and I am sure he will see me at once, if thou makest known to him my presence in the Alhambra.”

The soldier disappeared through a great arch of vast dimensions, which has long since been sacrificed to the mean purposes of succeeding generations ; and after a short lapse of time a small but richly attired old man advanced through it towards the Alcayde, who had by this time dismounted and was giving the necessary orders to his escort for their accommodation in the town ; and bowing before him said :—

“Aben Abdala, follow me to the presence of the mighty Mohammed, who is anxiously awaiting thee.”

The Moor also bowed low to the stranger, as he recognized in him the brave and celebrated Muza Ben Zegris, the prince and chief of the great clan of that name. With a measured step he followed the prince through the great arch-way, and entered a spacious oblong court, lined with coloured tiles curiously inwrought in black and yellow; this they traversed in silence, and emerged on the other side, after going through a long series of sumptuous apartments, which exhibited in their varied and elegant decorations the elaborate genius and intricate combinations of Moslem art into a comparatively small, but so rich a courtyard, that it was only *then* that all the enchantment of eastern pomp, luxury, and refinement, which I had imagined could no further go than what I had already seen, first burst upon my bewildered view.

This small but perfect court was no other than the now well-known Patio de la Albarca or of the great Fish Pool. In the centre glittered, with its millions of gold and silver fish, the pure waters of the basin from which it derives its modern name; and the blue cloudless sky above, was reflected on its crystal-like surface, while sparkling fountains played all around it, amidst the exotics and priceless plants which grew in apparently wild, but yet well trained masses all around, so that the bright colours of the different flowers might not offend with too much glare or too little

harmony the artistic eyes for which they were arranged.

On two sides of this court-yard rose high walls completely covered with arabesques and mottoes from the Koran, which formed a kind of pattern, whilst above ran a lofty and airy gallery, resting upon slender marble pillars, and surmounted with golden domes which blazed like fire with the contact of the sun's rays; a gallery which alas, has almost entirely disappeared to give place to the dead walls of the German emperor's shapeless palace.

At each end were light Moorish peristyles paved with marble, and so beautifully carved that these marbles might almost be said to be transparent. Under these, to and fro, went the numerous slaves and attendants of the palace; helping with their rich flowing costumes and many-coloured mantles to add to the beauty of the scene. Opposite to the horse-shaped arch by which we had entered this court, rose the lofty Tower of Comares, which revealed through its many open galleries and windows the splendid hall which it contained, and whose gigantic roof rose almost to its battled top.

The noble Prince of the Zegris passed on without deigning to cast a glance upon all this beauty; the Alcayde Aben Abdala followed him, and I, though I could hardly take my eyes off that heavenly court, also followed them into the interior of the palace.

I would fain attempt to describe to you all the wondrous and elegant apartments through which I passed, but I fear I could never do them the justice they deserve, nor even succeed in bringing before your imagination a picture, however vague and lifeless, of the wondrous reality, although you have seen those very apartments yourself not very long ago, but then only in their present desolate and ruinous condition which can hardly give anyone an idea of the characteristic grandeur and matchless beauty of the palace whose ruins, shapeless and injured by time and barbarous repairs, as they have been, still remain the wonder of Christian Europe, the monument of Moslem civilisation and art.

If, after so many centuries of neglect, and so many ignorant repairs in the worst possible style of art and of want of taste, the Alhambra still remains unsurpassed for beauty, how much more beautiful must it have been before the ravaging hand of time faded its colours, and the prejudiced and ignorant hands of men pulled down its pillars and white-washed its walls? How much more beautiful must it not have been at the time when Granada's proud sovereign inhabited those halls, and the poets and the artists from every land surrounded his golden Divan?

At last we emerged into the Court of Lions, that world-famed spot which travellers from every land have in vain tried to describe to their

countrymen on their return. And indeed, who could depict those elegant porticos, and graceful colonnades with their projecting peristyles wrought with the fantastic and fanciful arabesques, which only the highly cultivated and imaginative art of the Moors could have conceived, set off with enamels of every hue, and curiously inwrought with characteristic mottos from the Koran, whose beautiful Cufic letters adapt themselves so well to decorative writing? Who could describe the feelings of astonishment, mingled with unbounded admiration and delight, which even the most sanguine experience, at the sight of all these prodigious and unrivalled halls, which so well exhibit the elaborate genius and intricate combinations of Moslem art, set off with the richest and most precious marbles, and metals, which would appear to have been only formed to give expression to the highly intellectual and chaste imagination of a superior race of men? And to what could the bewildered traveller compare those light Arabian arcades of open filigree work, those countless slender pillars which surround him in all directions, and those gold fretted lattice casements of innumerable windows which open upon the most beautiful panorama of which, perhaps, the world can boast?

And indeed, the ravaging hand of time, which has proved merciless for the grandeur of Babylon and the elegance of Athens, seems to have spared, and almost preserved, with un-

usual care, this wondrous court-yard ; which even if it stood alone in the world, the last monument remaining of a long forgotten nation, would be enough to prove to future generations that there once lived a people whose art they might perhaps hope to equal in the course of long ages and profound study, but could never hope to surpass.

In the centre of the splendid Court of Lions rises the enormous alabaster basin supported by twelve lions, which gives its name to the whole of this portion of the Moorish Alcazar. These lions, perhaps the sole imitations of animal life in the entire range of saloons, and courts of the ancient Alhambra, were constructed by the Christian prisoners, and, modern savants tell us, were designed to represent the brazen sea, one of the vanities of King Solomon, which he ordered to be placed in the temple of Jerusalem.

Into this matchless court open spacious saloons ; for in this, the heart of the Alhambra, one marvel succeeds another, and the fantastic, yet symmetric architecture of the Moors, seems to have endeavoured even to surpass itself.

In front of the gateway by which we had entered, we could see the long horse-shoe arches of filigree marble, and the curious coloured tiles of the Hall of Judgment ; whilst on the right side of the court, richly adorned in the same style of elaborate art, opened the lofty and well proportioned hall, which has since merited the name of

the Hall of the Abencerrages, by the tragic end of the chief of that noble clan of warriors, whom Boabdil, the last of the Moorish kings, is said to have had secretly assassinated in that chamber, and whose innocent blood still stains the marble floor.

But the aged Prince of the Zegris turned his back upon this hall, and entered on the left another and not less sumptuous saloon, into which we soon followed him ; Aben Abdala walking noiselessly behind him, and I, though invisible to them, yet so close that I could at times hear their very breath. Here the sensation felt was more like that experienced in a dream ; an intense, yet subdued flood of light from above inundated us, with the numerous prismatic colours of the rainbow, revealing the admirable form of the apartment, and the elegance of the cupola which rose to a great height over our heads, displaying, as it gradually rose from the enamelled walls, resting upon twenty-four marble columns, a series of grottos, from which hung stalactites of every colour and hue ; terminating in one larger and longer than the rest ; from which hung a chandelier of massive gold, in which the lights were concealed behind precious stones of a size such as is now but rarely seen.

The walls were also adapted to produce a species of fascination with the varied combinations and exquisite designs of their stucco work, the delicacy of whose many-coloured lines, crossing

each other in a thousand forms, and uniformly returning after a variety of windings, could not be surpassed by the most vivid imagination.

Above the doors of this gorgeous hall, which to this day are considered unsurpassed wonders of workmanship, stands out in golden characters the oft-repeated motto—"There is no conqueror but Allah," whilst around the walls, and surmounting the beautiful border of coloured tiles, run long sentences from the Koran, which endeavour to prove that the beauties and glories of the Alhambra are as naught compared with those of the paradise which awaits the good Mahomedans after death.

In this hall we saw numerous attendants and knights richly attired in precious silks from the East, and chain armour inlaid with gold and precious gems. They were evidently princes and chiefs, but they all bowed low as Muza Ben Zegris wended his way without altering his pace, through their midst and gained a small doorway at which stood two Moorish soldiers on guard ; here he took off his gold embroidered slippers, and invited the Alcayde to follow his example ; for here began the private apartments which composed the Seraglio of Granada's king.

They ascended a small staircase in which porphyry, lapiz-lazuli, and mother-of-pearl, vied with each other, and crossed a little room lined with some Persian material curiously embroidered,

and traversing a gallery which looked upon a beautiful garden of roses, they entered a small but sumptuous apartment, whose walls of blue and silver shone like looking-glass in the bright rays of the afternoon sun, which flooded it from the numerous windows by which it was lighted.

Here a new and unexpected sight burst upon my astonished gaze, for here were assembled, forming picturesque groups around the chamber, all the beauties of the Harem,—houris such as one would expect to find in Mahomet's paradise alone; and whose charms it would be almost impossible for me to attempt to describe. There they sat, forming a Mohammedan paradise on this very earth, the noble daughters of Granada's chiefs, with their gazelle-like ever-glowing eyes, and lips of a hue which the roses around them might envy and covet; princesses as lavishly gifted with the charms of nature as exquisitely embellished by the hand of taste.

The Alcayde and the old prince were the only men there, for it was not for every man to behold so much beauty and live, and yet these lovely houris appeared not even to notice their presence; and indeed seemed as unconscious of it as of that of my invisible spirit.

Several slaves from the neighbouring coast of Africa, whose ebon complexions seemed to have been chosen with the express view of setting off,

by an unavoidable contrast, the white foreheads and fair cheeks of the Moorish beauties, stood at the doors in attendance upon their mistresses. To one of these it was that the Prince of Zegris addressed himself.

“Mohamed El Haygari, our great master,” answered the slave, “is in the Sultana’s dressing-room, and Lindaraja, our beautiful queen, is with him.”

Again we entered another room, in which more splendour burst upon our gaze, and at last stopped before a door wrought in solid silver. Muza Ben Zegris knocked respectfully at this door, and at a summons from within, he opened it, and before entering the apartment, fell on his knees and bent his proud brow to the very ground.

On a divan of white satin, embroidered in silver, lay Granada’s monarch, the powerful Mohamed, surnamed by his people the left-handed, apparently occupied in reading a despatch on which his eyes were bent; while several others lay carefully arranged upon an ivory table which stood before him. At his feet sat the Sultana, Lindaraja, the beautiful queen who has given her name to all this portion of the Alhambra, and whose charms form to this day one of the favourite themes of the Spanish poets.

At the sound caused by the opening of the door, she arose from the white satin cushion on which

she had been reclining, and drawing her kaftan modestly around her person, she retired to one of the windows which looked upon the town picturesquely situated below.

It would have been impossible not to have admired her as she stood by the window, her large blue eyes, which seemed to rival the sky in their deep cloudless hue, fixed upon the distant snow-clad mountains of Sierra Nevada. Her face was rather long but of perfect form; her nose small and of the Grecian type rather than of the Moorish; her hair, which hung carelessly about her face without the slightest ornament, was of a dark hue, as were her brows and eye-lashes, which contrasted wonderfully with her blue eyes and pale, dazzling complexion; her figure was tall and slim, lithe, rather than slender, but graceful in the extreme.

As if she had considered all possible combinations of toilette far beneath her need, her dress was simple almost to a fault; and consisted only of a plain long kaftan of the purest white cashmere, which enveloped her from head to foot, and hung gracefully around her, marking her perfect form with its many careless but rich deep folds, and discovering at last the smallest and most charming feet which had as yet trodden the marble floors of the Alhambra.

One look at this unrivalled beauty was enough to reveal to the stranger the good taste of the

great Mohamed who had chosen this sweet heavenly princess for his Sultana. He himself was now an old man, and his beard and the few hairs which escaped from under his plain green turban were as threads of silver. Yet his large, piercing, black eyes had lost none of their penetrating force, and his cheeks, though perhaps pale and care-worn, revealed no wrinkles, as if time had respected that calm, thoughtful countenance, in which passion had ploughed no lines and vice had left no ugly imprint.

“Advance, my faithful Alcaide,” he said to Aben Abdala, as soon as the latter had performed the three genuflexions required by etiquette; “Welcome to my Court. It is with pleasure that I behold once more the old companion of my youthful campaigns, in which the Christians used to run before my sword. What news dost thou bring me?”

The Moor looked towards the Sultana, and then towards Muza, but answered not.

“Ah! I understand thee,” continued the Sultan, “thou desirest to speak of my son; fear not, my Grand Vizier, Muza Ben Zegriss, possesses all my confidence; and as for the Sultana, I have no secrets from my wife. Speak, how is he? Is he happy? How does he spend his time in that lonely Atalaya of yours?”

“Beloved and mighty son of the Prophet, thou to whom all true believers bow in obedience,”

began Aben Abdala, again prostrating himself on the ground ; “ I, the most unworthy of thy subjects, dare this day to approach and to deliver into thy powerful hands—those hands which administer justice to the faithful, and death to the infidels—the trust which thou, misguided by thy love for me, didst one day place in my unworthy hands.”

“ What means this ? ”

“ Most high, most mighty Sultan, I am not worthy to retain the precious charge of thy son any longer ; I cannot preserve him from the eyes of the world ; and I cannot render him as happy as so good a youth deserves to be.”

The beautiful Lindaraja started as these words reached her ear.

“ A son ! ” she exclaimed, “ a son of our great and beloved king ! Oh, speak, man ; speak, I command thee ; what means this ? Explain thy words.”

Aben Abdala now fixed his trembling eyes on those of his sovereign, as if desirous of his permission before answering the queen’s anxious questions ; but ere he could even receive a sign, the door opened, and three beautiful girls entered the chamber, accompanied by a man richly attired in gold brocade, who fell on his knees before the king, and presented a sealed parchment.

This man was no other than the great El Abbas, the Hajib or prime minister of Mohamed, and

the chief of the powerful clan of the Abencerrages. Of the beautiful girls who had entered with him, and who now grouped themselves around Lindaraja, two were the king's own daughters by a former wife, for the Sultana had borne him no children ; and the third—by far the most beautiful and the most richly attired—was the Abencerrage's only daughter, the proud Zorayda ; the greatest heiress of Moorish Spain, and one who well deserved, by her unsurpassed loveliness, her name of “Star of the Morning.”

“Welcome, my daughters !” exclaimed the queen, giving her hand to the princesses to kiss ; “and thou too, Zorayda. Methinks I am in the track of a great secret, one that I am sure will fill your noble hearts with joy—the king has a son. A son !—just think of that, wise El Abbas—a son and heir to his throne ; a joy which I am destined never to present to Granada, to repay all the love and riches with which its good king has surrounded me !”

This was said rather in a bitter tone, but yet with such a sweet smile playing on her exquisite lips, that no one present appeared to notice it ; and the three girls pressed round her and overwhelmed her with their questions.

Both Muza Ben Zegrís and El Abbas, who now stood erect in front of the king, had their eyes fixed on him, and seemed anxiously awaiting for him to explain the Sultana's words.

Mohamed El Haygari seemed to hesitate for a moment, between his evident desire to communicate to his beloved wife and favourite ministers the secret of his life, and thus free his conscience of a burden which had long preyed on his spirits, and the natural reluctance that made him shrink from exposing his weakness to those he loved best in the world, and whose respect he feared to forfeit. At last, making an effort over himself, he began, in a half-trembling voice, which gained strength as he proceeded in his discourse.

VI.

“Fate steals along with ceaseless tread,
And meets us oft when least we dread ;
Frowns in the storm with threatening brow,
Yet in the sunshine strikes the blow.”

COWPER.

“MY faithful friends, and thou, too, my beloved wife,” he said, “for several years I have tried to hide from you all, the one secret of my life, the secret which has weighed heavier on my mind than I could ever have imagined, and which has embittered the happiest hours of my existence. But now I think that age and illness have numbered the days which still remain to me, and I feel bound to disclose my secret—a secret which, until now, Aben Abdala—the man you behold to-day for the first time in the Alhambra—has alone shared with me.

“For long years I had hoped that the merciful God of all true believers would have answered my prayers, by giving a son and heir to take my place when I am gone, and to lead the armies of the Prophet to the fight, but my fervent prayers have not been answered ; and, as you all know, my nephew, Ali Mohamed, is my acknowledged successor on the throne of Granada. But what all

of you ignore--what even thou, my beloved Lindaraja, hast never suspected—I have a son, a son who I wish to Allah had never been born to me !

“A few years before the death of my noble father raised me to the throne, and when yet a stranger to the grandeurs of Granada and the cares of its government, I lived in a retired castle near the sea. My wife, Kafija La Horra, presented me with a beautiful boy ; but the birth of this child caused the death of the mother, who expired the very moment of his birth. This, as ye are all aware, is a bad beginning to a life whose first action in the world is to cause death ; but the misfortunes do not end here—for me they were only at their beginning. That unhappy day was marked in the memories of men by the greatest eclipse which has ever darkened the earth ; it seemed as if the sun itself shrunk from the sight of the murderous being who had just entered the world ; and indeed more wonderful still, the very earth shook as he stepped upon its surface for the first time, and buildings and rocks were rent asunder, whilst the infuriated sea retired from the shore for the distance of several miles, and sunk in its depths a whole fleet of galleys which the Caliphs of the East had sent to help us against the invading forces of the Christian monarchs, who had at the time invaded our states, as you all no doubt remember.

“I lost no time in summoning all the astrolo-

gers and Egyptian priests that were near at hand, and having gathered them all around me, I asked them, without loss of time, to draw the horoscope of my new-born son. Ay, my friends, ye will not now wonder that my very hair stood on end when I read the fate which awaited him. Muley Ahmet, for such is his name, was to be the most unhappy of princes, the most rebellious of sons, the worst of kings, a traitor to his country and to his God,—a Moslem who would deliver his country to the Christians, after revolting against and imprisoning his father and lawful sovereign; a man who would disgust humanity with his crimes and vices, and a being, who, after involving Granada in troubles and wars of every description, and after having soaked every inch of his kingdom with the blood of the faithful, would himself perish by the hand of a murderer, and leave a name to history that would turn cold the very blood of all succeeding generations. Such was the horoscope which the wisest men of the kingdom, the most famed astrologers from Asia, and the most learned priests from Egypt, drew for my son.

“A few days later, news was brought to me from all sides of the terrible victories obtained by the Goths the day of Muley Ahmet’s birth; and that the two great armies, composed of the principal men of Granada, and commanded by all the flower of our nobility, which my father had

sent to oppose the invasion, had been divided by the earthquake, defeated by the Spaniards, and were now in full flight towards Granada, whilst the hated standard of the Cross rose proudly on all the frontier towns and castles.

“This news only served to add to my consternation. It was evident that my unlucky son was the cause of all these misfortunes, and to prevent even greater harm, and in order to save my country from such a monster, I conceived the idea of hiding his birth from the people, and of keeping him for ever secluded in an inaccessible fortress amongst the mountains.

“For this reason I entrusted him to Aben Abdala’s care, and as if to show me that Allah approved of my decision, that very day the arms of the prophet were again victorious, and the Christians were forced to abandon the towns they had so easily captured.

“But alas! I was young then, life lay hopefully before me, and I knew not that no other son would come to take the place of the first. Years passed, and others came—happy years for the welfare of Granada—joyful for all true believers; for the Christians dreaded our power, and the arts and commerce flourished throughout all the kingdoms of the Moor; but miserable and empty for me, who saw one hope after another vanish, and only daughters born from my numerous wives.

“Now I am too old to hope for any children, and Granada has chosen a successor to my power in the person of my nephew, ignoring the existence of Muley Ahmet; yet I cannot sleep in peace. I can no longer enjoy life, for what, if after all, I was too hasty? What if the astrologers were mistaken? That son whom I so hated at the time of his birth, though I have never beheld him since, has taken possession of my heart; and may Allah and his holy prophet pardon my weakness!—I love that child—I love that son, the only one I ever had, and at times repent of my hasty conduct, of my cruel and unjust determination, and think myself a traitor to my country, after all the love I have had for her, in thus depriving Granada of her natural lord and master, of her prince and future king.

“Had I a right to do what I did? Alas, it is now too late to repent!”

VII.

“What must be, shall be: and that which is hard to bear for him that struggles against fate, is only little more than choice to him that is willing.”
SENECA.

It would have been curious to have observed the different changes of expression which took place upon the various countenances of those six persons assembled in the boudoir of the Sultana Lindaraja—though, as Byron says :—

“The face of Mussulman
Not oft betrays to standers by
The mind within, well skill'd to hide
All but unconquerable pride.”

whilst the king in a voice often broken by half-suppressed emotion, made the curious statements which I have just repeated to you as faithfully as I can well remember.

The beautiful Queen of Granada could hardly conceal her rising emotion, which increased gradually as her royal consort proceeded in the narration of that sad episode of his youth; and when he had at last finished, her beautiful, soft blue eyes were veiled by tears.

The two princesses listened to their father's tale as they might have listened to any strange story

which moved their feelings, but whose truth they could hardly credit.

Zorayda, the proud daughter of the Abencerage and the adopted daughter of the king, engaged to that very nephew of his—Ali Mohamed—who was to succeed him on the throne, hardly seemed to pay any attention to the king's words ; though at times a keen observer might have noticed an almost imperceptible movement of her coral lips, which betrayed more than she would, perhaps, have cared to show, the stormy emotions through which her proud and haughty heart passed, as she listened to this strange avowal from the Sultan, which might perhaps deprive her of that throne she had already counted as her own.

Muza Ben Zegris, the faithful, but now almost decrepit minister of Mohamed, listened with an attentive ear, and wondered in his heart why his master had never before confided to him this important secret ; that master whom he had believed could have no secrets from his faithful ear.

The warrior-chief and consummate courtier, El Abbas, preserved a proud air and arrogant smile all the time, as if he had known the whole history of Muley Ahmet's existence from the first ; and as for the Alcayde Aben Abdala, his feelings quite overcame his usual haughty and dignified bearing, and hot tears ran down his wrinkled cheeks, which were soon lost, however, in his long white beard.

Ah ! Walter, what I felt you may easily guess ! I need hardly tell you, I felt happy and sorry at the same time ; and could scarcely analyze my own feelings at the moment ; one thing, however, I had gained by my journey to Granada and its beautiful palace, I at last knew the great secret of the life of Muley Ahmet ; towards whom I felt myself instinctively drawn, as if by a mysterious but all powerful sympathy, and whom I felt to be my one, first and only love. But I was too anxious to learn the decision the noble king would come to, now that he had at last opened his heart to his friends and revealed to them the secret of his son's existence ; and trying to calm my own feelings, or at least to hush them in my spirit heart for the present, I once more became the calm invisible listener I had been until then.

Lindaraja, the sweet beautiful sultana, was the first to break the oppressive silence which had reigned for some time after Mohamed had ceased to speak.

"Thy love for Granada," she said, "overcame thee, great king ; and in thy anxiety to preserve the peace of thy country thou hast acted unjustly and mercilessly towards an innocent boy, who could not possibly have had anything to do with the defeat of the Moors, or with the eclipse and earthquake which chanced to take place the day of his birth."

"As for his mother's death there can be nothing

wonderful in that, many women die in childbirth, whose children are not doomed to any peculiar fate on that account."

This was said in a half-trembling voice by Muza Ben Zegris, and more as a suggestion which he ventured to volunteer than anything else.

"The will of Allah must be accomplished and it is foolish for men to try and oppose his already settled plans," exclaimed sententiously the proud Abencerrage.

As for the two princesses, they merely approached their father and knelt down tenderly by his side, without daring to speak; and Aben Abdala contented himself with passing the palm of his hand over his eyes, and remaining motionless in his place near the door.

"Ye may be right, after all, my friends; and I perhaps carried my love for Granada, and my belief in fate, a little too far. Advise me, what should I now do to remedy the evil?"

El Abbas, as the grand vizier and chief adviser of Mohamed, was of course the one who should speak first, and he began in the following terms:

"As far as my limited intellect permits me to see, oh wise son of the prophet! this subject can be divided into three heads. First, thy natural love for the country thou hast so long and so wisely governed, and thy just anxiety to leave, after thy death, a worthy successor on the Moslem throne, and one who will continue thy judicious and

prosperous measures, for the good of our people, and of our faith, when the supreme hand of Allah shall take thee to occupy thy appointed place in the paradise of the faithful. The second is—Whether king and sovereign lord, as thou art over life and death, thou hast the power to keep thine own son from the throne which the prophet had destined for him, and rob the country of its born sovereign. The last and third consideration, noble Mohamed, is—Whether the fate predicted by the astrologers and priests from the East, will really prove as fatal as thou hast feared, for even if the prince's inclinations lead him to disasters, perhaps he will be able to overcome them, for the most unlucky of stars, the most bloody of horoscopes, only influence the free will, but have no power to direct it. And therefore, oh great king! thy son, though born under the most unlucky of planets, and in the midst of earthquakes, eclipses and defeats, may yet overcome the evil star, and prove, after all, a wise and just prince, and a great king like thyself."

The Sultan answered not; he lay upon the white and silver cushions of his ivory divan, and seemed lost in deep and all-absorbing thought.

Lindaraja now approached him, and pressed his hand between her own white and delicate palms. "Thy son lives, beloved husband, and Muley Ahmet is still alive, but where? Surely not in Granada. I should have found him out long

ago ; my heart would have led me to his prison, even if he had been buried seven storys deep in the Torre Vermejas, or in the deep vaults of the Alcazaba."

"Thou art right, my Sultana," whispered the king almost in her ear. "Muley Ahmet is not in Granada ; fearing that the people would discover his existence, and yet dreading to put a premature end to his innocent life, I had him conveyed to a lonely tower, surrounded by the wildest mountains, where only the light of Allah can freely find its way. There my unlucky son still lives, happy in his ignorance of the world around him, ignoring alike the cruel father who deprived him of life's greatest boon the very day after his birth ; and the proud nation over which he ought one day to reign. Aben Abdala, my faithful friend, whom ye now behold for the first time, has been his only companion, and under his care he has lived ever since the first days of his birth, the only knowledge which I have allowed Aben Abdala to impart to him being that of our great and joyful faith, which will teach him to hope to obtain, in a paradise of eternal bliss, the joys and pleasures I have deprived him of in this world."

Zorayda, who all this time had remained half-lost in a reverie, now advanced, and addressed the king for the first time. It would have been hard to imagine a face which indicated a grander soul or a nobler heart, and yet there

was an indefinable hardness in those firmly-compressed yet beautiful lips, from which physiognomists might have read the girl's proud soul, even unaided by any other indication. When she smiled, however, which was but seldom, her whole countenance seemed to brighten, as does a landscape when a ray of sunshine bursts suddenly from behind the clouds, and between those thin open lips one could see two beautiful rows of the smallest teeth, which far surpassed in whiteness and delicacy the rich, oriental pearls around her swan-like neck. But, after all, the mouth was only a secondary point in that handsome face, and only the keenest of observers would have noticed the peculiar expression of her lips, while her large, dazzling, black eyes shone above them and seemed to pierce through one's very soul, with their cold, glittering, and all-piercing gaze. Now, when she spoke, all those present turned towards her, and her proud, haughty father, the great general of the Moslem armies, and even the wise all-powerful king of Granada, listened attentively to that girl's melodious and full-toned voice, as she said :

“ Noble king of the faithful, though apparently against my own interests, which until now have been those of Ali Mohamed, thy nephew, I am going to suggest a stratagem, which, if it meet with thine approval, and that of thy wise counsellors, will satisfy every one, and at once answer

the three main points, so wisely drawn up by my father. My idea is that thy son Muley Ahmet should immediately, and without loss of time, be brought to Granada, installed in the place which by right of birth belongs to him, and that we and all the court should do homage to him, as if he had lived all his life in the Alhambra. In this way thou wilt obtain three things which I will oppose to the three points suggested by my father. The first is, that if he show himself prudent, wise, and just, in spite of the unpropitious fate which threatens him, thou wilt have the joy of having thy son near thee for the rest of thy life ; and after thy death we shall have our own lawful sovereign. The second, that if instead, he show himself arrogant, ignorant, unjust, and cruel, thou wilt have done thy duty by him, and wilt then be justified in condemning him once more to obscurity ; using that power which Allah has conferred upon thee to govern this kingdom of Granada, and to provide for the welfare and happiness of thy subjects. The third being, that once his fate decided, it will not be too late for Ali Mohamed to ascend the throne at thy death, whilst thy unnatural and unlucky son inhabits once more the savage woods and untrod mountains where he now is, and which he would still believe to be the entire world ; for, in order not to endanger his future happiness I would have him brought to the Alhambra during his sleep, a sleep which a few

chosen plants will soon produce, and if the trial prove a failure, let him be reconducted to his prison in a second trance, so that he might easily be made to believe afterwards that all he saw in Granada had been but a dream. In this way, oh king! every objection is met, every question answered, thy conscience is for ever hushed, thy people for ever happy, and thy son—if his fate still pursue him—as ignorant as before of his real station, for in this world, as we all know, all who live live but in dreams.”

“Wisely hast thou spoken, noble daughter of the Abencerrages, I approve of thy plan, and will carry it out as soon as possible, that is, provided that certain plants may be found which will produce sleep, and yet endanger not his life.”

Aben Abdala, joyful in the hope of seeing his ward Muley Ahmet,—whom he had gradually grown to love, in the wilderness and solitude of the mountains in which he had been for so long his only companion—at last in the position to which his birth and his noble disposition entitled him, readily agreed to Zorayda’s plan, and undertook to find the plants which should produce the desired sleep, and to have him conducted in a litter to Granada.

The Sultana and the two youthful princesses were delighted at the idea; but the former prayed her lord not to have him conducted to the secret precincts of the Alhambra, from which it would be a

sin to banish him, if required, but rather to have him taken to the summer palace of the Generalife, which rose on the brow of the opposite hill amid groves of orange and rose-trees, in a perfect paradise of sylvan beauty. Mohamed agreed to this, and after settling a few smaller points relative to the prince's journey, and his installation in the Generalife palace, the Alcayde left the royal presence with a lighter heart and a quicker step than that with which he had entered it; and actually seemed to the beautiful ladies in the numerous rooms through which he passed, the handsomest man, in spite of his age, whom their eyes had ever beheld in the gorgeous halls of the great Alhambra.

VIII.

“ Prados de perpetuo abril !
Qué mágica variedad !
Allá la palma gentil
Juega en dulce vaguedad
Con el ambiente sutil,
En trenzas mil desatados
Arroyos aquí parleros :
Cipreses allá, y granados,
Y bosques de perfumados
Naranjos y limoneros.
Do quiera la vista gira
A lo lejos contrastada
Halla la tierra que mira
El fuego de Sierra Elvira
Lo apaga Sierra Nevada.
Sobre estas, nubes de oscuro
Amarillento color ;
Sobre aquella el grato arbol
De ese cielo encantador
Como ningun cielo puro,
Oh ! Comprendo la obstinada
Defensa, ruda, mortal
De los Moros, que es Granada
Una ciudad estremada
Un paraiso Oriental.”

RODRIGUEZ RUBI.

LAVISH nature had prepared a site for a palace which the ingenious and exquisite art of the Moors had erected on the brow of a commanding hill, washed on two sides by the crystal waters

of two rivers, which wind their way upon golden sands* through groves and gardens; reflecting, as they gently glide along towards the beloved capital of the Mohammedans of the West, luxurious palaces, scattered at intervals on their banks, between clustering shrubs of roses and jessamine, and plantations of olives and vines; and gorgeous mosques, whose slender airy minarets seem to rival with the palms that surround them in beauty and grace;—a palace such as no imagination could depict—a palace—nay, let me rather say a paradise at once—for it would have been hard to discover where nature ended and art began, or where man had continued and improved the original creation of God, so picturesque, and perfect, and sylvan was the spot; so rich, and beautiful, and light the numerous buildings which together composed the royal palace of the Generalife.

And it was in this gorgeous residence, and amidst all these indescribable and unsurpassed refinements, that one day, while the sun was still at its full, and its golden rays helping to add to the general beauty and charm of the place, that Muley Ahmet, the unlucky Prince of Granada, suddenly awoke after a long sleep, which had commenced whilst he was still in the secluded wilderness of the mountains, which, until then,

* The sand-beds of the rivers Darro and Genil are supposed to be mixed with gold, and hence their names.

had been to him the entire earth, and all the universe of which he had ever heard.

He awoke to find himself a powerful prince, no longer the wild captive El Zogoybi ; but the heir to a mighty empire, the only son of a great king.

When his eyes opened, and rested for the first time on the precious embroidered silks which composed his couch, and on the richly painted walls of the chambers in which he lay, he could hardly suppress a cry—a cry not so much of astonishment as of horror ; “ Is it possible,” he murmured, “ so soon dead ! ”

The poor youth believed himself dead ! Dead, now that he had begun to live for the first time !

Grave servitors and blushing young pages presented him the rich, gold embroidered garments which he was in future to wear ; fancifully attired slaves, with strange complexions, prepared sweet-smelling perfumes by his side, whilst a soft prolonged strain of lutes and harps, proceeding from an adjoining gallery, filled the air with melodious sounds.

Muley Ahmet spoke not, and a profound silence reigned, only interrupted now and then by the sound of the musical instruments outside ; for no one present dared to address the prince while he remained silent ; and, indeed, he was so surprised at all he saw, that at that moment

he could not possibly have spoken to have saved his life.

With a rapid step he left the sleeping-chamber and emerged upon one of those numerous hanging balconies which look towards Granada ; here he could not suppress another exclamation, for the beautiful panorama of the wide Vega, surrounded on all sides by snow-clad mountains, with the city of Granada rising in its midst, surmounted by the Alhambra with its thousand domes and minarets, burst suddenly upon his view.

“ I could never have imagined Paradise to have been so beautiful ; the wildest, the most exaggerated descriptions of Aben Abdala could not do justice to the wondrous beauty of the reality ; thanks be to Allah that I am dead at last, and that I have abandoned the miserable earth, and am to enjoy this paradise for evermore.”

An attendant, younger and braver than the rest, now approached him, with a low bow. “ Most powerful prince, thou art not dead, the son of our prophet could not die so soon ; thou livest, and all these beautiful things are thine ; —all, as far as thine eye can reach is thine,—from those peaks which would seem to pierce the skies to the smallest plant in the plain below, all is thine ; that fair city is thy capital ; and that sumptuous palace over yonder, whose domes dazzle the eye with their splendour, is the resi-

dence of thy father, the great, the mighty Mohamed, King of Granada."

"Impossible, man ; thou art endeavouring to mislead me, or thou art thyself sadly mistaken ; thou knowest me not ; I am the miserable, the unfortunate El Zogoybi, or rather, I am so no longer, for I am dead, thank Allah ! Dost thou think there live so many people on that little spot of accursed ground they call the world ? During all my life I never saw half as many people as are now present on this balcony."

"All those whom thou seest around thee, great prince, are thy servants ; and within the walls of this thy palace alone, there live more than three thousand, ready at any moment of either day or night to do thy bidding."

The prince shut his eyes, as if trying to fix his bewildered thoughts ; but was too perplexed as yet to comprehend all the strange circumstances of his situation.

"Am I alive ? Am I not dreaming ?" he asked himself, vainly trying to recollect how he had come to that palace ; and by what strange transformation the mountains and walls which had been his only home, his world, his universe, had suddenly disappeared to give place to all these wondrous sights which he could hardly realize. He was still lost in this confusion, and still in the balcony, when Ali-Mohamed, the king's nephew, and El-Abbas, the chief of the Aben-

cerrages, accompanied by several other chiefs and princes, presented themselves before him to do him homage.

"Most high, most fortunate son of the Prophet ; Muley Ahmet Ben Mohamed, whose name is written with stars in the azure vaults of heaven, welcome to thy palace ; welcome to thy kingdom."

"And who art thou ?" inquired the prince.

"I am thy cousin, Ali Mohamed, and this venerable man beside me is the great El Abbas, the prime minister of the kingdom, and the friend of thy father, our just monarch."

"I do not understand—say no more—I fear my reason is leaving me," he muttered in a broken voice. "Why bewilder me with great names which have no meaning for my ear, and with hosts of men on all sides whose eyes seem to devour me ? Leave me—leave me—I would fain be alone once more."

The prince and his companions, as well as the attendants of Muley Ahmet, now left him,—Ali Mohamed, disgusted with this unexpected cousin who was going to deprive him of the throne ; and the grand El Abbas, whose pride was wounded by the little notice which the new prince had taken of him—of him ! the greatest man in the kingdom, as he thought himself.

For a long time Muley Ahmet remained alone admiring the view, and trying to collect his thoughts, and to accustom his eyes to all these

marvels. Later in the afternoon, when the sun's rays began to lose some of their strength, Zorayda—the handsome daughter of the Abencerrages, who had planned his visit to Granada—gently and noiselessly stepped out on to the balcony, and for a short time remained in silence contemplating the handsome features and manly bearing of her princely *protégé*; but when Muley Ahmet became aware of her presence, he instantly rose and confronted her.

“I told them to leave me alone. What seekest thou with me, man?”

“Man!” repeated the beautiful girl, bursting into a silvery laugh, “where dost thou come from that thou dost take *me* for a man! I am no man.”

“Thou art not a man?”

“I am a woman, prince; hast thou never seen one before?”

“Woman! woman!” repeated the bewildered prince, who had never beheld a woman in his life, “I have heard of thee, I have read about thee, but where is thy serpent?”

“My serpent?”

“Yes, and thy apple? I know all about thee now, vile temptress! thou shalt not tempt me, though thou didst ruin Adam; thy forbidden fruit offers no temptation to me; begone from my sight, woman! or I will kill thee with as little compunction as I would crush an insect whose

whole existence I can extinguish in a minute with my foot." And drawing his scymitar, he would have slain her; if the astonished Zorayda had not rushed out of the balcony screaming loudly for help.

All the attendants now entered the apartment, Ali-Mohamed and El-Abbas with them.

"The creature has lifted his hand against me—against me, the daughter of the Abencerrages! the king's niece;—he has dared to menace, after having cowardly insulted me, but he is only a savage after all. I forgive him, for I scorn him too much to resent his strange conduct."

This was said partly to her father and partly to her betrothed. She then cast one more glance of scorn and contempt upon the prince, and left the apartment.

"Prince," exclaimed the infuriated Abencerrage, "thou hast actually dared to insult my daughter, the child of a race as noble as thine own!"

"Unworthy cousin, thou hast dared to raise thy cowardly hand against a woman, and that woman my promised wife!"

"Go—leave me—leave my presence—what I have done, is done. Am I not the prince here? What right hast thou, old man, to question my words, and thou, presumptuous idiot, to judge my actions? Begone, I say; am I not master here?"

“How soon he has learned to command!” whispered Ali Mohamed.

“An Abencerrage cannot put up with such an insult, no, not even from the son of his king;” muttered El-Abbas, as his hand wandered instinctively to the scymitar at his side. And in spite of Muley Ahmet’s decided command, and the fierce expression of his voice, no one moved from his place, and murmurs of discontent were heard from the various groups.

“If this is the way I am to be treated, I would rather go back to my prison!” exclaimed the prince, brandishing his scymitar, and running with a desperate air towards his terrified attendants. It would have been difficult to say what the consequences would have been if the great doors had not been suddenly thrown open by the slaves, and Lindaraja, the beautiful Sultana, had not entered the apartment at that moment.

The attendants made way, and the infuriated prince suddenly found himself in the presence of his father’s wife. For one instant he wavered, but suddenly flinging his scymitar away, he threw himself on the ground at her feet.

“Welcome, my son!” she murmured in a sweet low tone, for she was apparently so overcome that she could say no more. But the prince rose and clasped her in his arms, bursting into a flood of tears.

Lindaraja, more astonished than pleased, tried

in vain to escape from this sudden burst of affection, but as no one dared to touch either the prince or the queen, she was obliged to submit to his embrace until his emotion had somewhat subsided, and she was able to free herself from his arms.

“Angel of light, soul of my life, star of my destiny!” he now began in a wild way, his large eyes fixed on her countenance, and almost starting out of their sockets, “I have waited, I have wept, I have mourned, long enough for thee, but thou art come at last, never, never, to leave my side!”

Ali Mohamed, as the principal personage there, thought he should interfere and stop this strange outburst of sentiment. “Prince, think what thou art doing; this lady is the Sultana, the first and dearest wife of our king—thou dost forget thyself sadly.”

“I will not listen to thee, man; how often am I to repeat my commands. This is not a lady, but an angel, an angel of the Lord. Dost thou think, fool, that I do not know an angel when I see one?”

And again he would have seized her in his arms, had she not started back, and taken refuge behind El Abbas. “He is mad,” she burst out, “mad, mad, and to think that this is the son of my sovereign-lord, Mohamed!” She now chanced to see Aben Abdala who had stolen unperceived into the apartment, anxious to watch

the proceedings of his pupil. "Faithful Alcayde," she said, going to him, "this sudden change has turned the poor prince's head, thou art the only one who knows him here, and he knows thee, perhaps he will recognise thee; pray explain to him everything, for I much fear if he be kept longer in doubt, his reason will give way. Then turning to the rest—"My lords, let us leave the prince alone with his guardian;" she said, and she left the chamber followed by the ladies who had accompanied her, and by all the princes, chiefs, and domestics.

Muley Ahmet was left alone with the old Alcayde, who now approached, and knelt at his feet, with a deferential air such as he had never before shown him in all the long years they had lived together.

"Will your Highness permit me to kiss that hand?"

The prince looked at him, and could hardly believe his eyes.

"Thou here, Alcayde? Here! and at my feet, asking to kiss my hand. What has come over us both, perhaps *thou* canst explain all this?"

"Yes, I can, with thy permission."

"Oh speak, who art thou, and who am I?"

"Thou art the Prince Muley Ahmet Ben Mohamed, heir to Granada's throne, and I am thy humble servant, Aben Abdala. But I see thou canst not comprehend my words, oh great and

noble prince. Strange as it may seem to thee, thou wert born to reign, and to command ; the noble son of a great king, the only heir to a mighty empire ; but fate marked thee from thy birth with a mark of blood ; wondrous signs and disasters accompanied thy birth ; and thy father fearing the evil influence which thy unlucky star would exercise over thy destiny, had thee brought up in a tower, in a solitary tower, outside the world of action ; where I alone have been thy companion — thou didst perhaps believe thy master, — but one who was born but to obey ! What thou hast known until now has not been the world ; I deceived thee when I told thee so, this, *this* is the world, and here thou canst command and *live*."

The prince seemed lost in a dream. "Strange, strange," he muttered now and then, but without interrupting the Alcayde's speech.

"The wise king whom Allah gave thee as a father, fearing to have been unjust towards thee, and shrinking from depriving his faithful Moors of their natural lord, had thee conveyed hither during thy sleep, to see whether thy actions and thy conduct would contradict the horoscope which the magicians had drawn out at thy birth ; and whether thou wouldst conquer with thy virtues the evil star of thy destiny. Thou knowest all now, and art free to do as thou desirest."

At these last words, Muley Ahmet seemed to

awaken to the whole reality. "I am free—free at last!" he exclaimed with a wild outburst of joy. "But see the first use I make of this freedom," and with one blow he felled the old man to the ground.

"I understand all now. Traitor! Tyrant! Slave! at my feet! I have submitted to thee long enough! I am the master now, the royal blood of my fathers flows through my veins, I feel it, I am a *man* at last!"

"Mercy, Muley Ahmet! Have mercy upon my grey hairs!"

"Mercy! thou hadst none for me. Thou hast proved a traitor to the law, an evil counsellor to the king, and a tyrant to me; and so the law, the king, and I, condemn thee to die, and to die at my hands."

The long scymitar of the prince was in an instant in the air, the old Moor on the ground saw it flash above him, and in another moment would have decided his fate. But he had yet a little strength left, and with one struggle—a struggle into which he threw all the energy of his decaying manhood—he rose to his feet and called loudly for assistance. The attendants and slaves crowded into the room, and the infuriated prince would have had to contend with them all, if he had again attempted to strike the Alcaide.

Great confusion naturally ensued, it was already the third time that day, the third time in the

short space of an hour, that they had been summoned to prevent their prince from committing murder. In the midst of the confusion the royal guards entered the adjoining gallery and the loud voice of the herald, announced the arrival of the king.

“It is the Sultan, thy father,” whispered one of the servants in his ear.

With a quiet, peaceful step, Mohamed entered the apartment.

“Prince!” he began, in a low tone of voice in which there was great pathos, “I had hoped to congratulate thee on thy arrival in our palace, but now I fear I must reprove thee rather than give thee a father’s blessing. I have heard of thy conduct, and it has pained me deeply. Methinks I was right after all when I locked thee up in a tower, with only rude soldiers for thy companions; thou art not worthy to be the friend of chiefs and nobles, and the evil star which presided over thy unlucky birth still hovers over thee, to prompt thee only to deeds of blood. What blessing can I bestow upon thee now? thou thyself shalt be the judge of thine own conduct.”

“I scorn thy blessing, king!” said Muley Ahmet with a dignified air, and in a calm well-modulated voice. “I have done without it until now, and can well live without it in the future; for what love, what justice, what compassion could I expect from a father who has had me imprisoned

until now ; from a father who has had me brought up in a wilderness like a wild beast of the woods ; and who now, even now, when he has been forced to produce me, endeavours to cast scorn upon me, adding his cutting words to the injury he has already done me."

His tone had been so noble that all present were astonished at his moderation.

"Is this the way in which thou dost intend to repay me for the tenderness which my loving heart has always felt for thee, and which has made me bring thee hither against all the dictates of prudence ?"

"If thou hadst never brought me to this place I should never have known the truth ; I should still be happy, happy in my ignorance ; but now, now that I know the full extent of thy injustice, cruel, merciless father, I can feel nought but scorn for thee."

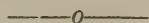
"No thanks ! Not one kind word from those lips for a broken-hearted father, who loved thee ! Alas, alas ! thy heart is of stone ; the curse of Allah is upon thy soul. I am fully convinced of it now ; I hear it again now as on the day when thou wast born ; it cleaves to thee, it pursues thee ; it shall pierce thee through and through ; it shall smite thee in the meridian of thy power, and thou wilt draw Granada after thee into the bottomless pit. Genius wasted, ambition blasted, penitence deferred, a life of misery, and a death of

shame, such will be thy lot, unnatural son ; thou hast sealed thy doom ! Be not too certain of thy power, be not too proud in this, perhaps thy only day of grandeur ; for, though thou mayst doubt it, perhaps thou art but dreaming all the while."

The king pronounced these last words as if his whole heart were in them, and ere he had finished, passed his hand over the prince's face, and from a little flask he let a few drops of a colourless liquid fall upon his lips, and Muley Ahmet dropped senseless to the ground.

Walter, it is already late ; remember that you are still of the world, and must rest and sleep like the rest of men. I have spoken enough for to-night. Farewell ! I shall watch over you, asleep or awake I shall still be close beside you. Remember that, but do not expect me to-morrow night ; it would injure your health if these communications were to be repeated every night. Adios ! sweet dreams to you, and remember that you are no longer Muley Ahmet."

NIGHT THE TWELFTH.



“All thoughts of ill; all evil deeds
That have their root in thoughts of ill ;
Whatever hinders or impedes
The action of the noble will ;
All these must first be trampled down
Beneath our feet, if we would gain
In the bright fields of fair renown
The right of eminent domain.”

LONGFELLOW.

I.

“ Though thou seest me not pass by,
Thou shalt feel me with thine eye
As a thing that, though unseen,
Must be near thee, and hath been ;
And when in that secret dread
Thou hast turn'd around thy head,
Thou shalt marvel I am not
As thy shadow on the spot,
And the power which thou dost feel
Shall be what thou must conceal.”

LORD BYRON.

MUCH to my regret Conchita kept her promise and did not come to me the next evening, though sometimes I fancied that I felt her near me ; it might have been fancy, or perhaps only my intense desire for her presence, that made me think so ; but her gentle, beautiful spirit-form appeared not ; and to please her I tried to think as little about her as possible.

I passed the day wandering about the town, walking up and down its quaint, old-fashioned streets, and visiting its curious churches, for Guanabacoa is an interesting town ; and it may almost be called an ancient one in this country, where everything seems so new and fresh. I grew accustomed in time to my small lodging, which, now that my angel wife had favoured it

with her presence, seemed almost sacred to me. It was a little out of the town, away from other habitations ; indeed it seemed to have gone astray from it altogether ; and halted there for a moment on its way somewhere else, to admire the quiet home-like landscape around ; those extensive fields of sugar cane in front, those groves of plantains on either side, looking so green and fresh ; and the blue hills beyond ; with a palm tree here and there rising boldly against the blue cloudless sky. A common, everyday sort of landscape enough, yet one which to the eyes of an European was not devoid of a certain charm.

The second evening I grew more and more impatient. There ran a small stream just in sight of the verandah opposite my room, which troubled me more than I could account for, the murmur of the waters had a disagreeable effect on my nerves ; and in vain I tried to conquer the feeling by watching its flowing little waves under the full moon, which lighted up all the landscape in almost every detail. But a few hours before and it had been the sun that gilded those peaceful ever-gliding waters ; they now shone as brightly and glinted as gaily beneath the silver rays of the star of night. " Ah, even so," I thought, as I sat in the verandah watching them, " even so rolls the stream of time for society ; one luminary succeeds the other, equally welcomed, equally illumining, equally evanescent ! "

This brought to my mind the strange adventures of my past existences. "Strange, strange that I should forget ; for although at times I almost fancy that I remember something of that past, yet at others I seem altogether a stranger to it ; a stranger to the very existences through which I have toiled and suffered—for what ? Ay, but can I deem that part wholly wasted, wholly lost, if its lessons have made me what I am ? Should I have been what I am to-day, if Muley Ahmet had never trod the marble courts of Granada's palace ? Perhaps not. Who can tell ? But yet, we seem so foreign to each other, now that ages and civilisations stand between us, that I can hardly fancy myself him, or him me.

"The stream of human life, individual as well as social, is indeed but too faithfully portrayed by the running waters of that little stream ; gently they glide, now illuminated by the mid-day sun ; now reflecting the thousand stars of night ; gently they glide from field to field ; gradually increasing, as now swiftly, now slowly, they cross the sands, the meadows and the deserts of life, until the tiny stream becomes a great river ; a river that will carry everything along in its mighty course ; and then, then it is at last lost in the great ocean of eternity, whither we are all hastening ; and its waters are mixed with those of thousands of other rivers, and their individuality is lost—lost ! all lost apparently for us, mere spectators, who cast but one

careless, half-curious, half-unconscious glance at its ever-changing surface ; but not actually lost—I cannot believe that.”

Presently Conchita appeared before me ; once again I held that beloved form in my arms ; that form which to others would be but empty air, and I soon forgot my melancholy thoughts.

For some minutes we talked about ourselves, about our present, far less interesting—strange to say to both of us—than our past, or our future.

“ Ah,” she exclaimed, “ How happy I should have been if I had been able to talk to you thus, when you lived in the world as Muley Ahmet the Moor ! But there was not enough sympathy between our spirits then, long years of love, and constant communion of thought had not then mingled our souls, into one ; love had not yet formed between us the all-powerful link that can draw even the dead to the living ; and we were condemned to live apart for a few years longer.”

“ But you will tell me all, Conchita, of my soul, will you not ? ” I exclaimed. “ You will tell me how it was that we first began to love each other, and how that hatred of old, became, in the course of ages, the love of the present.”

Conchita. “ I have promised to tell you all our past, and I intend to keep my promise ; but do not ask me to come to you too often. It is for your good, darling, that I behave with such appa-

rent unkindness, in depriving you of the pleasure of seeing me ; I say, seeing me Walter ; for in reality, though invisible to your material eyes, I am always nearly at your side."

Her gentle form lent fondly upon me and pressed a passionate kiss on my lips. After a short pause, she continued the history of our past in the following words.

II.

“ Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams ? ”

A. TENNYSON.

“ LOVE, which had now become complete master of my soul—love, before whose fierce tide all the barriers of life and death had been borne down—love, before which I must for ever in future bend ; drew my spirit once more to the old tower on the mountain’s brow ; and again I became the silent, invisible, though not by any means passive, observer of Muley Ahmet’s actions.

He had been conveyed back to his old prison as he had left it during his sleep ; and the next morning, when he awoke, he had not much difficulty in believing it all to have been a mere dream, so strange and unnatural did it all seem to him, now that he could coolly think about what he had seen and heard ; and wonder, and speculate on the possibilities and impossibilities of the wondrous palace and fair landscape where he had for a few hours believed himself to be a prince and a ruler of men.

“ Thou hast had a dream, Muley Ahmet ? ” enquired the Alcayde—who had followed his pupil once more to the tower—in his old accustomed way.

“I suppose so,” he answered, “though it all seemed so real that I could have sworn by Allah to its reality. And then he went on to narrate all the strange adventures through which he had passed ; and all the particulars of which Aben Abdala knew but too well.

“Thou must have been happy in that extraordinary land.”

“No, not particularly so ;” answered the prince without appearing to feel the least pang of regret.

“I wish thy dream would only come to pass some day, what great things thou wouldst do for me if thou wert indeed the Prince of Granada. Didst thou see me in thy dream ? Ah, yes ! and what sort of a palace didst thou command to be erected for me, in that strange land of thy dream ? ”

“A palace ! thou wilt never believe me, Alcayde, but traitor and tyrant, as I fancied in my wild dream thou hadst proved, I would have slain thee with mine own hands if I had not been prevented.”

“Impossible ! thou couldst not have been so cruel towards me, towards me who have loved thee as a son, nursed thee in sickness, and preserved thee from all danger as a wolf preserves her young.

“No, no, thou couldst not have been so cruel even in a dream.”

"But then I saw such an angel! ah, Alcayde, thou canst have no idea."

"An angel, boy! It must have been a woman."

"Oh no, I saw a woman too, a fine handsome youth, a little smaller than a man, just as you have told me they were, charming to the eye, but vile deceivers at the best. No, it was no woman my Lindaraja; but an angel, an angel of Allah. Lindaraja was the name the others called her by; and they told me she was my father's wife, only think how absurd!"

"Oh, in dreams all things happen like that;" answered the Alcayde, with a half-suppressed smile; "and thy father, how didst thou behave towards him?"

"Oh, I fear almost as badly as I did to the rest;" he answered bitterly.

"Oh what a good thing then, Muley Ahmet, that thy dream was only a dream; but remember that even in dreams it is good to be kind and amiable to all; if thou shouldst ever dream again, remember my advice boy; think that thou art dreaming and that at any moment thou mayest awake."

Muley Ahmet agreed with the old Alcayde that it was better perhaps to be kind to all, even in dreams; and felt really sorry for his misconduct during last night's dream. How infinitely more sorry for himself would he have been had he but known that it was a *reality* after all.

All thoughts of his ever becoming king of Granada were now given up, even by his poor father, who could not bring himself to think of his unlucky son without a pang.

Muley Ahmet was now allowed more freedom ; although always forbidden to traverse the mountain and to cross the river which bounded the open country ; on the other side of which rose the thick woods that gradually sloped down towards the land.

Poor Friar Jeronimo, whose very existence had glided out of Aben Abdala's mind when the prince had been conveyed to the Generalife, still remained in the tower ; and, much to his disgust, was forced to stay there, by the soldiers who actually expected a ransom from the poor monk in exchange for his liberty. But as the good friar had no money, and as he knew very well his prior at Seville would never think of sending for him, he was obliged, *bon gré, mal gré*, to remain in the Moorish Atalaya.

Muley Ahmet met him sometimes in his rambles, and as he had liked him from that first day when he had been made a prisoner, they often had long and interesting conversations together ; during which the Monk naturally tried to inculcate the principles of the Christian faith into the young Mahomedan's mind. What a glorious thing it would be to illuminate the utter darkness in which this young man seemed to live. To release this

impressionable soul from its bondage ; to make the light of Christ's gospel shine fully upon his spirit ; to instruct his ignorance, to give him a faith, he who seemed to possess none. He often thought if he had set out from his convent in distant Seville to preach Christianity to the heathen and to convert the Mahomedans, here he had found a grand, noble work, without going farther ; and he set himself seriously to work to convert Muley Ahmet. With how much pleasure I saw this, having longed for it from the very beginning, you may imagine, dear Walter.

In the afternoons, while the Alcayde slept his *siesta*, and the soldiers lazily dozed on the ramparts, he would read to him out of an old Missal ; almost the only thing which the rapacious and greedy soldiers had left him, together with a translation of St John's gospel in Arabic ; which they would not dare even to touch, believing it to be cursed by their prophet.

Muley Ahmet's mind was virgin soil, ready to receive the new seed that fell upon it, that seed of grand thoughts and grand deeds which have made Europe what she is. Having been a Christian, though an ignorant one, in his last existence, he found it an easy matter to become one now ; and much more so as he had never gone deep into the Mohamedan faith ; the rudiments and ceremonies of which he only knew,—and, indeed, it would have been strange if the Catholic Recesvinto,

who only a few centuries before had burnt Jews, and roasted Arabs, the better to prove his ardent faith to the satisfaction of all good people—had not been a Christian at all in his very next life.

So while Muley Ahmet went on progressing rapidly in the good path, to the great delight and satisfaction of my spirit; I determined to go to Granada once more to see how matters were going on there; and as to think of a place, to a free spirit, is enough to be transported thither, in less than a minute I found myself in the beautiful capital of the Spanish Moors.

III.

“The state is out of tune ; distracting fears
And jealous doubts jar in our public counsels ;
Amidst the wealthy city murmur’s rife ;
Loud railings and reproach on those that rule,
With open scorn of government : hence credit
And public trust ’twixt man and man are broken ;
The golden streams of commerce are withheld,
Which fed the wants of needy hinds and artizans,
Who therefore curse the great, and threat rebellion.”

ROWE.

To my great surprise I found Granada in a wild state of excitement. The people had heard of Muley Ahmet’s existence, and the scenes which had taken place in the Generalife were the subject of violent, and even in some cases, of bloody discussions throughout the town.

The quarter of the Albaicin was in the greatest uproar ; while the usually peaceful merchants in the Zacatin were seen standing in front of their shops—some of which their owners had thought safer to close altogether, for fear of any sudden outbreak,—whilst discussing the wondrous event. In every quarter of the town, from the Genil to the Darro, the greatest excitement prevailed.

Some thought that the king had no right to deprive them of their prince, and force his nephew

upon them, as his successor—who unfortunately was not over-popular in the town—others maintained that the curse of Allah rested on the Zogoybi—as the prince was generally called—and that it would be tempting Providence to force his father to recognise him as his heir. The general opinion, however, was in his favour. Mobs are always inclined to novelties, and Ali Mohamed was, as I have told you before, by no means one of their favourites ; and unluckily in Granada, and particularly on this occasion, the mob seemed to carry the day, as mobs alone know how to do.

A disordered and corrupt state, weakened by revolutions and internal strifes, and polluted by petty politics, offers to any ambitious man the greatest facility for a rapid rise to popularity, and even to power ; which in the long run naturally ends in breeding jealousy and rivalry ; destroys in the course of time all union, and ends by severing the strongest ties of party, and leaving each individual to fight his own battles unaided ; as unfortunately is the case in Spain at this day. But at the time of which I am speaking, in the good old days of Moorish government, this was impossible ; a good constitution, a popular king, and the greatest of all securities, prosperity and self-respect, were enough guarantee to the general public ; and therefore what the populace feared was not so much the present as the future. They were contented and happy with their present king,

the arts flourished, commerce brought gold to their town, science progressed, and peace reigned throughout the kingdom ; what they feared was the always dangerous consequences of a new dynasty, and therefore they resented Mohamed's hostility to his son, and his idea of placing another and not over-popular prince on the throne that by rights should have belonged to Muley Ahmet.

"He was always left-handed," they muttered, remembering the surname of El Haygari, which their fathers had given him on the occasion of some unlucky expedition against the Christians.

Time only increased the general discontent. Mohamed was getting old and infirm, and the dreaded Ali Mohamed's reign was approaching. Even the princes and chiefs in the halls of the Alhambra murmured ; for almost everyone of them had some complaint or other against the king's nephew ; and perhaps believed a monarch brought up in a solitary tower among mountains, would know little of courts, and would give them numerous opportunities of advancement, and of making their fortunes. Mohamed could not be a stranger to what was going on, he knew what the people thought, and what his courtiers hoped ; but he remained determined in his resolution. "It is the best for them, and not all the chiefs of Granada shall make me change my mind. When I was strong enough to conquer my love as a father, do they think that I shall be weak enough

to give way to their prejudices? No, Ali Mohamed shall be their king; what I have done has been well done."

One day, as he sat in state in the great portal of the Gate of Judgment, to administer public justice to his faithful subjects, according to the old traditional custom, which the Arab Caliphs had adopted from the ancient Israelitish kings; and which has since given rise to the characteristic designation of the Sublime Porte on the banks of the Bosphorus; he was suddenly interrupted by a great and noisy multitude who forced their way into the very presence of their king, and in wild and not over-courteous language demanded from him his immediate order for his son's return to Granada.

Mohamed was taken by surprise, and under the circumstances he could not deliberately refuse their demand with safety; his courage, however, never faltered; and for some time he tried to check the tumult by honestly explaining the reasons that had forced him to imprison his own son. But it is useless to reason with people whose mind is already made up.

Mohamed lost his time and his breath.

"Justice, justice for Granada," was shouted on all sides.

The old monarch vainly tried to falter some more reasons—his words were never heard.

Then one of the crowd advanced, and in a

rough, but honest and determined voice, which bespoke command, as the voices of the meanest working-men sometimes can, to the great surprise and bewilderment of statesmen, he thus addressed his king :—

“You sit at this portal to administer justice to the people, and yet you will not listen to the people. You pretend to be the father of Granada’s children, and you deprive them of their born prince, who, by the laws of our nation, should succeed thee on that divan where thou now sittest. We want justice, king ; we want our prince, our future king ; it is needless to speak of fate to us ; fate hath no voice but the impulses of the heart ; fate has no right to step between the people and their lord. Give us our prince, great king ; give us our prince, and thou wilt die beloved as thou hast hitherto lived. If, on the contrary, thou wilt persist in thy unnatural conduct, thou alone wilt be answerable to Allah for the consequences.”

Cries and shouts of approval greeted this speech on all sides. The king—the poor old king—listened to it with breathless anxiety ; the unfortunate father thought of his unlucky son—of the future that awaited him—of the throne he withheld from him—of the prison to which he had condemned him instead—and then he thought of Granada ! He had wasted what remained of his once vigorous constitution upon long nights of sleeplessness ; weary vigils, full of sad thoughts,

heart-rending misgivings, and bitter, vain regrets all for that son—that son whom he loved—that son whom he dreaded—the hope of his heart, the curse of his life. Worried by these conflicting emotions, he had seen his years dwindling to the briefest span. And now—now that his mind was made up at last—now that the fatal resolution had been taken—his people, the very people for whom he had sacrificed his own feelings as a father, his ambition as a king, revolted against him, and would force him to recall Muley Ahmet to his side, and to place the unlucky prince on the throne of Granada!

There was a pause, but after a few minutes the king was able to speak; but those few minutes seemed as years to all present, so violently did their hearts beat.

“Friends,” he muttered at last, “I have spoken. There is no conqueror but Allah. His will be done.” Then, pointing to the mysterious key and hand sculptured on the top of the crescent-shaped arch above his head, which together formed the three great religious symbols of their faith, he exclaimed, “Ay, sooner shall that hand take yonder key and with it open the gates of Paradise to the unbelievers, than shall the laws of Allah be changed or altered one tittle. By the holy tomb of the Prophet, by his venerable beard, by the hope of ever seeing his radiant face, I swear to you, sons of Granada, that I have done

what I considered to be right. Tempt not the God of our fathers, the God of our sons, by your unbelief. I have spoken. No more of this, I pray, beloved subjects."

The greatest silence had reigned during his speech ; and now that he had done, silence still reigned, for no one dared after this, and in the very precincts of the Alhambra, to rebel openly against the king, however much they might disapprove of his conduct.

Mohamed rose from his divan, and surrounded by his Alcaydes and by the haughty Viziers of Granada, and followed by the soldiers, he left the Gate of Judgment, and, traversing the noble porticos and massive towers beyond, proceeded through the upper bastions to the private apartments of the Alcazar, where the mob could not follow him, and the voice of the people was smothered and subdued before it reached its gilded halls and fretted domes.

The guards were from that day doubled in the Alhambra, all the gates of the city were guarded as if an invasion had been feared, and patrols of armed men paraded the streets after nightfall ; but all these precautions seemed useless, for, like the calm before the storm, the people of Granada seemed the more tranquil and contented while preparing for revolt.

IV.

Hamlet. O God! I could be bounded in a nut-shell, and count myself a king of infinite space; were it not that I have bad dreams.

Guildestern. Which dreams, indeed, are ambition; for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

Hamlet. A dream itself is but a shadow.

Rosencrantz. Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality, that it is but a shadow's shadow.

SHAKESPEARE.

ON my return to the old tower, I found that matters had been progressing even more favourably than I could have hoped, during my short absence. Friar Jeronimo had not only converted Muley Ahmet to Christianity, but he had employed his time so well, that ere my arrival the prince was actually a baptised Catholic.

My joy, as you may imagine, knew no bounds when I learnt this news. Muley Ahmet would at last be mine, and heaven would witness our mutual happiness, though for a few years yet, earth would deprive me of my lover.

My love, Walter, was so great that in my selfishness—for love in its first stages is but selfishness,—I would fain have kept you until your death in that lonely tower, away from the haunts of men, where no mortal woman would come to

rob me of the heart which I already considered as my special property.

The people of Granada were, however, not to be done out of their prince; a great revolution had suddenly broken out in the capital, which the various provinces had responded to with the greatest promptitude.

The sound of drums and trumpets echoed throughout the kingdom, mingled with the shrill notes of countless clarions and the hoarse voices of thousands of men; for the Moors were essentially a warlike nation, and the few years of perfect peace which had followed the last Christian invasion, had only served to increase their desire for war and plunder.

Their aged king, who since the scene at the Gate of Judgment, had daily expected this general outburst, had wisely retired to the fortress of the Alhambra and was prepared to risk everything rather than yield to the demands of the people. He had summoned a divan, and by the advice of his counsellors and ministers had despatched a large body of armed men to the mountains that they might guard all the passes which led to the prison of his son, to liberate whom he well knew was the chief cause of the revolution.

But in thus doing he had left the capital almost destitute of soldiers; and when the infuriated people rose to a man, they became in one day almost absolute masters of the various quarters of

the town. The encounters that ensued were desperate and deadly ; for, though fewer in number, the adherents of the king were well trained soldiers ; and their enemies but the very dregs of the population collected together behind barricades and upon house tops, and only armed with indifferent javelins and scymitars. But their number was great, and the next day, several of the Saracen chiefs joined the insurgents with their various bands.

All the forts and gates were taken one after another ; and on the third day the insurgents took possession of the Vermillion Towers, and the poor king was compelled to seek safety in flight. The Alhambra surrendered after a violent struggle, on the part of the king's guards ; and that evening the great bell in the tower of the Vela announced to the anxious peasants in the fair Vega below the city, for miles and miles around, that their old king Mohamed, he who for so many years had led their victorious armies into the very heart of Christian Spain, had ceased to reign over them.

The chiefs of the princely tribes of the Alabez, the Gazans, and the Gomerez, who had joined in the revolution, now collected together in the golden halls of the Alcazar, and there established a government ; but only a provisional one, for their intention was to place Muley Ahmet Ben Mohamed on the throne. And to accomplish this one of their first measures was to despatch an army to

the southern provinces, where the prince still remained a prisoner, with orders to bring him to Granada.

Soliman, one of the Alabez princes took the command of this expedition, and at the head of a large number of well armed horsemen, left Granada on the following morning for the mountains. But these were still occupied by the soldiers which Mohamed had sent to guard his son's prison ; and at the news of the intended expedition, the old king—who had taken refuge in the still faithful town of Malaga, from which he well knew he could at any moment cross to the neighbouring coasts of Africa—despatched more soldiers, and placing his nephew and intended heir at the head of them, felt determined to fight his faithless subjects to the very last.

The battle which followed was bloody and desperate ; for both sides felt that it would be the last, after which the conqueror would reign, and the conquered might expect no quarter ; but as I am not very good at describing battles, my dear Walter, things which I have never seen and which I abominate, as do all progressed spirits ; I shall pass this one over in silence and relieve your suspense at once, by telling you that the king's troops were at last defeated ; and that their general, Ali Mohamed, had to fly once more to the town of Malaga, followed by a disorderly host of wounded men and jaded horses, which was all

that remained of the once gallant army of Granada's invincible king.

Soliman's army, though sadly disabled and much diminished in numbers, lost no time in gaining the neighbouring sea-shore, a wild and storm-beaten coast, guarded on the right by rocks and crags ; with high cliffs and mountains beyond, which seemed to reach the very heavens ; whilst the blue, outstretched Mediterranean glittered on the left.

It was, indeed, a strange contrast, that silent scene of wild mountains and solitary sea, with the solemn stars shining peacefully above them, to the scenes they had taken such active part in that day ere the sun had sunk behind the azure sea, when their long scymitars and pointed javelins, reddened with kindred blood, had flashed in the setting sun ; and their hearts overflowing with every evil passion and desire, and their eyes blinded by the glare of steel and the clouds of dust, and their fratricidal hands raised on high to avenge friends and destroy rivals ; they had fought like demons and conquered like gods.

But the spirited and maddening din of battle had now ceased ; the deep repeated thunder of the combat, the shrill sound of the clarion, and the hollow tramp of steeds were over ; and a silence—a silence mournful as it was eloquent—now reigned around them ; nature was hushed, silent, still ; darkness had succeeded light, the

deep hollow murmur of the sea below them was scarcely perceptible, and even the sea-gull's monotonous cry was hushed. But over their heads, rising into sight, the moon shone like an orb of blood—by some strange but not uncommon condition of the atmosphere thus reddened—and looked sadly upon them from above. It was the symbol of their faith, the crest embroidered on their banners, the sign by which their prophet had once conquered, and which had since soared on the wings of ever-renewing conquest, till it out-reached even the cross of Christ, and laid the loftiest crest of European chivalry in the very dust.

But the pale half orb of silver, which the great prophet had chosen as the bright material emblem of his revered faith; and which they had been taught to consider chaste, pure, and holy as their very religion, was now stained with blood; it looked down upon them from heaven's azure depths like an orb of fire—what meant this? Was it a sign of Allah's wrath? Was he displeased with what they had done that day? or was it a warning of the consequences of their victory?

They dared not think so, they felt convinced, or, at least, tried to think themselves, that what they had done had been well done. But the strange phenomena weighed heavily upon their superstitious minds, and all cheerfulness was

banished from their hearts. If a stranger had seen them at that moment, he would, I feel certain, have taken them rather for the vanquished host, than for the victorious army.

Early on the morning of the morrow, they reached the brow of the mountain, upon which rose the tower, that, for so many years, had been the home of their new king. Aben Abdala, taken by surprise during his sleep, made no resistance, which, moreover, would have been useless, considering the few soldiers he could command, and the countless multitude which now invaded every hall and filled every court.

But the Alcayde's surprise was as nothing compared to that of Muley Almet, who had never before seen so many men, excepting in what he still believed to have been a dream.

Soliman, the Alabez prince, the chief leader of the expedition, was the first to explain its object to the bewildered youth.

"The king, thy cruel father, oh, great prince! he who for so many years has kept thee out of thine inheritance is no longer our king, his cruelty towards thee has at last disgusted his subjects, who have revolted against his sway, and now, of their own freewill, proclaim thee, Prince Muley Ahmet Ben Mohamed, King of Granada."

"I King of Granada! Ah me! in vain thou triest again to deceive me. Methinks it is the evil one who puts such words into thy mouth to

lead me to temptation and to ruin; my father is no king."

Soliman then explained to him the strange history of his birth and of the fatal horoscope drawn out by the astrologers from the East, which predicted that he, one day, would rebel against his father, and plunge Granada into evils of all kinds; but as he gradually enlarged upon the prophecy, its probable truth began, for the first time, to flash through his mind—had not one part of it at least, actually occurred?—and the brave soldier could not go on, so intensely did he feel, that perhaps after all he and his victorious army were only forging, for themselves and for Granada, chains harder to bear than those they had so easily broken in a moment of passion and folly.

Muley Ahmet stared around him in wild confusion.

"Again—again," he muttered, "the wild dream again begins to take shape in my brain; and honours and crowns are offered before my bewildered eyes! No—no," he faltered. "It shall not be. I know well that it is all a dream, and this time I will conquer myself; begone, shadows that appear before me; begone sleep, in which these things take shape; I will dream no more of grandeur, and riches, and power which the smallest breath of wind can in one moment disperse and turn into thin air. Away, away,—I know

thee now, and know that mad ambition is but a shadow's shadow; and that things are not what they seem, for life is but an empty dream, and at any moment we may wake to the sad reality of things that *are* !”

Neither Soliman's reasonings nor those of his companions seemed to have any effect upon him, he turned his back to them; and refusing to see them any more, shut himself up in his solitary chamber.

The old Alcayde Aben Abdala had quitted the tower that very morning with a few of his retainers; and having obtained a passport from Soliman was now on his way to Granada, where he intended awaiting the consequences of this strange adventure with all the self-possession of an Oriental.

Friar Jeronimo, on the contrary, had in the meantime made his way amongst the new soldiers, and from them had learnt the whole truth; believing of course that this sudden change of affairs could not but be of the utmost importance to the good of the Church—the new king of Moorish Granada being a Christian convert, to say nothing of the honours and advantages which it would bring to himself, the spiritual adviser of so mighty a king—he determined at once to see the prince and have a serious talk with him.

He found him shut up in his chamber, trying to forget the past dream as well as the present

one, for he could not yet bring himself to think of that strange first dream without a pang of deep regret.

The good old monk told him in his sweet, gentle, winning way, and in the strongest language he could command, that the present was not a dream; that he was actually the son of the king; that a throne was really offered to him; and that the men who surrounded the tower were real live men, and not shadows as he tried to suppose.

“But, good father, I have seen the very same thing not so long ago; the same men; the same grandeurs and power; thrones and riches were then offered to me. I saw it all as plainly as I see it now—and yet it was all a dream!”

“Say not so, my son; it was a vision from heaven, a warning which the good God presented to thee as a proof of what was to be; it was to teach thee what thou shouldest do when in power; despise not that dream, if dream thou wilt still call it; despise not instruction, however mean may be the instrument through which it comes. Even if it be a dream, learn to profit by it. For whether asleep or awake, we are equally the care of Providence; and neither a dream nor a waking thought can occur to us without the permission of Him to whom we owe our life and in whom we have our being.”

The good friar was so earnest in his words,

so vehement in his reasons, so honest in his manner, that Muley Ahmet was almost convinced by him.

“Strange—strange,” he muttered, “that while in a senseless condition, we should enjoy a life so infinitely superior to our normal one; and that with sealed eyes we should behold things which the world could never have contained; the slumber of the body seems to be the waking of the soul, it is the bond of sense, but the liberty of reason; and our real every day life can never hope to match the fancies of our sleep. Yet, good father, I believe thee. It might have been a warning, as thou sayest; it might have been a vision, ay! or it might have been only a dream! I care not. I feel that I am somewhat more than myself in my sleep, and I am happy in the thought. Life is so short that the greater part of it is made up, after all, of dreams;—dreams which may vanish, dreams which may fly, but dreams that are true while they last; true—ay, perchance, truer than most things in this world. I will therefore dream and vex my mind no more with the thought of awaking. I will enjoy the present and forget the morrow; but I shall also try to behave like a man and like a Christian; even in my dreams; for since thou hast initiated me in the mysteries of the true faith, I know that nought good is ever lost, and that noble actions count for something even in dreams. Tell the soldiers who await me

below, that I am ready to follow them, ready to be their king. Thou, holy father, wilt come with me and aid me with thy good counsel, for I need that, God knows ! But if, after all, it should prove a mere dream—these soldiers mere shadows, the honours they offer me the wild hallucination of my sick brain—if it should all prove only a dream ; which seems but is not . . . Then I shall still have the comfort of thinking, when I awake to-morrow, that I tried to do good—though only in a dream !”

There was a pathos in his voice as he said this, a pathos in his resignation, all the deeper for the very cheerlessness of his tone, and as he spoke, his manly breast rose and fell, and through their long black eye-lashes, his dark eyes flashed a look of joy ; it was however a rapid one, and Friar Jeronimo scarcely noticed it. Muley Ahmet now drew himself up to the full height of his commanding, strongly built and symmetrical frame ; and his hand seemed to seek at his side with a nervous half unconscious movement for the sword which hung from his belt. At that moment he looked like the chosen champion of Christianity, like the predestined hero who was sent by heaven to plant the cross upon the vermillion towers of Granada—and I felt that he possessed my heart ; that my very life was dependent on his ; and I was happy, for I loved him well, and knew my love was holy.

V.

“ A monarch's crown,
Golden in show, is but a crown of thorns.”

MILTON.

THE Prince's march from the old tower to the capital was in every way a triumphal one. In every village through which he passed new feasts and new shows awaited him, and as he approached Granada the entire population came out to greet their new monarch; the rejoicings that followed his final installation in the Alhambra were remembered for centuries afterwards, and fathers transmitted the story to their sons, until the Christian Isabel put an end to all Moorish traditions.

I shall not attempt, however, to tell you of all that happened; of the wise or unwise measures adopted by the young king, or rather by his ministers; for his ignorance and utter inexperience made him only too often a stranger to the abuses which were performed in his name; I shall still less attempt to describe to you the effect which this sudden change in his life had upon his mind; or enter into minute details as to whether he was happier now than he had been before, or whether

Granada's king enjoyed more freedom, than had done the unknown prisoner of the solitary Atalaya by the sea ; for if I did, hours, nay days, would pass ere I had half done, and you would fall asleep, wearied out, as one does after reading one of those fashionable novels which seem entirely made up of long descriptions of character, and which some people think so fine.

One of Muley Ahmet's first acts on arriving at the Alhambra, was to pay a visit to the Sultana, the beautiful Lindaraja, whom the king had left behind with the whole of his harem, the day of his precipitate flight to Malaga.

This step, as you may easily imagine, caused me no little anxiety, for I still remembered, with a pang, the agreeable impression which she had made upon him the day they had met for the first time in the Generalife ; and being myself in the strange situation of an unseen and unknown lady-love, I naturally dreaded the effect which other women might produce upon his young and ardent nature ; and therefore feared and almost hated every pretty woman who approached him.

But I was most agreeably surprised to find, that this time, not even the unparalleled charms of the fair Sultana caused his heart to beat with a quicker movement. He spoke to her as if she had been a friend, whose conversation pleased him ; and if it had not been for a few strange expressions which he used now and then, and

which his peculiar education excused, he might have easily passed for a man of the world, accustomed to behold beautiful women every day of his life. It would indeed have seemed as if Muley Ahmet was not quite such a stranger to my presence, as I had at first imagined. He certainly felt my influence over him at times, and once, in a dream, when his spirit was almost free from its earthly prison of flesh, I had contrived to appear before him, so that he had an idea, though necessarily a very vague one, of my person; and since that night my airy ethereal form often floated through his dreams like a celestial vision of supreme fairness and beauty—for I was beautiful then; yes, Walter, almost as beautiful as now that I am yours.

He decided that the Sultana should join her husband at Malaga, from whence they were to sail across to Africa as soon as possible; and that the whole of the harem, together with the numerous servants and slaves, should be allowed to follow, and that even the treasures which Mohamed had left behind in his flight, should also be forwarded to him. By this noble act, so unusual in a conqueror, particularly in those days, the new king tried to atone for his usurpation of his father's throne and fortune, which by the strict Mahometans, was considered a most sinful act; for the peculiar veneration which Moslems in general entertain for the paternal authority is well known.

This generous act pleased the Moors in general ; but it pleased me still more, for it gave me hopes that he would have no earthly love, when he thus easily parted with the whole of the harem which, by right of conquest, now belonged to him.

But all his measures were not equally popular. At the instigation of Father Jeronimo, and perhaps also following the impulse of his own heart, he not only granted all sorts of special privileges to the Christians, but he even admitted Spaniards and Goths into his divan, and gave the most important posts in his government to Christians from Seville and Castille. The Moors looked at each other in mute astonishment when they heard of these strange proceedings ; some suggested that he was betraying them to the Castillian king who had bought him over ; whilst others feared that his reason was giving way. The greatest discontent reigned in the town, and the fickle Arabs, tired already of their new master, wished themselves once more under the paternal rule of Mohamed ; the true believer, the defender of their faith.

Shortly after Muley Ahmet's installation in the Alhambra, Aben Abdala, his old tutor, keeper, and for many years his only companion, appeared before him to do homage to his beloved pupil who had now become his king.

According to the oriental fashions, which formed the etiquette at the court of the Spanish Moors,

he knelt down before him, and crossing his hands upon his breast, bowed his white head to the ground, and in this position he demanded forgiveness for his, at times, seemingly harsh, and perhaps cruel conduct to him in the past.

“I have been a faithful servant to thy father, most powerful king, and I have fought many battles by his side ; by his especial orders I have kept thee prisoner for many years, it was his will, not mine, that made me thy jailor. I now own myself, as far as thou art concerned, to have been too devoted to him, and as he no longer is king, I give up the command he gave me, and the benefits I derived from it. I now throw myself on thy mercy, most noble king, my only hope of safety being in the goodness of thy heart, which I know to be as true as the steel of my scymitar ; and I hope that thou wilt only consider how faithful a friend, and not whose friend, I have been.”

The young king was pleased with this speech, his heart seemed to rejoice at the sight of this old man, it was so pleasant to see an old friend, now that he was surrounded by new faces on every side.

“Nay, nay, Alcayde !” quoth he, “thou shalt not only be safe, but thou shalt remain the governor of the old Atalaya ; and with more pay than thou hadst before, for thou hast proved a true friend to my father, and thou wilt prove thyself a friend to me, for I can depend upon the

generosity and the faithfulness of thy disposition ; and as thou hast treated me at the command of my father, I hope, thou wilt in future treat my enemies, now that thou art governor, and exercise power under my command."

VI.

“ Life is a weary interlude,
Which doth short joys, long woes include ;
The world the stage, the prologue tears ;
The acts vain hopes and varied fears ;
The scene shuts up with loss of breath,
And leaves no epilogue but death ! ”

KING.

FOUR weeks had now passed since Muley Ahmet Ben Mohamed had begun to rule in Granada as king. And these short twenty-eight days had been sufficient to convert the idol of the people, the popular young prince, the hope of all true believers, into the most hated of kings, the most feared of tyrants, the most despised of men. Such are the changes which the most natural events can produce on the public mind.

It is true that these four weeks had witnessed changes and reforms enough to disgust the least bigoted of Mahomedans ; changes which could not but shock the upright minds of the Moors ; reforms which seemed to set the whole Arabic race at defiance.

A Christian church had been opened in the Alhambra, in the very heart of the sacred palace of Mohamet's descendants, a bishop from Castille

had taken up his abode within the sacred walls of that Moorish fortress, and, as if this were not enough, a foreigner, an unknown monk from Seville, had been named grand vizier, and exercised unlimited power over the sons of Allah.

The great bewildering surprise which such changes had at first inspired had now ceased, and a general and deeply-felt discontent and indignation alone reigned throughout the kingdom.

The terrible words of the horoscope, drawn up at the time of his birth now weighed upon the whole nation. It had been predicted that he would be the most unhappy of princes, the most rebellious of sons, the worst of kings, a traitor to his country and to his God ; a Moslem who would deliver Granada to the Christians after revolting against, and imprisoning his father and lawful sovereign ; a man who would disgust humanity by his crimes and vices, such was to be his fate ; and they, in their ignorance, in their folly, in their ungratefulness, had revolted against their good old king, and placed this monster instead, on Granada's throne.

An Algihed or holy war was proclaimed by the priests and faquirs from every Mosque in Granada ; the Muezzins appointed to give notice to the faithful of the different recurring periods of prayer during the day, from the minarets of the various towns and villages announced to all men, and at all hours, the crimes and heresies committed by

their king in Granada, and incited all true Arabs to rebel against him and to fight for the faith of the holy prophet, if they did not want the Christian monarch to take possession of their beloved country.

The princes of the council, the chiefs of the different tribes within the divan, and the scheikhs, faquirs, and emirs, denounced the king before the all-powerful judgment seat of Allah, and in the presence of all the people, as a traitor and a Christian. The people had become so furious against the poor young monarch that if he had appeared amongst them, even in the royal square of Vivar-rambla, they would have torn him to pieces without mercy; matters indeed had now taken such a desperate turn, only two things remained for him to do—to give in, or to die.

The chiefs who had aided his cause, and who had taken a prominent part in the first revolution, fearing the vengeance of their old king for themselves or their families if he ever reigned over them again, did naturally all that was in their power to restore confidence between the rash king and his discontented subjects; but he had no ears for them, he did not seem to care much whether he was popular or not; and I have often thought since, that the reason of this was that in those gorgeous halls of the Alhambra, so resplendent with gold and enamel of every hue, he felt himself alone; alone though surrounded by crowds

of courtiers and soldiers, who were only too ready to flatter his vanity, or minister to his smallest wants with a promptitude and a pleasure which would have satisfied any other man ; but Muley Ahmet was alone—he could not sympathise with other men—his education had been so different from theirs ; his tastes, his likes and dislikes, seemed so strange to those around him that he felt but ill at ease in that royal palace ; and cared not enough for it to make any effort to remain there, though he was the all-powerful king and sole master of all he surveyed.

If I had been beside him to counsel, to guide, to pour my loving soul into his, perhaps he might have cared to preserve that throne, if not for his own sake, at least for mine ; but as days and days passed, he grew more and more convinced that he was never destined to find on earth the object of his dreams, the idol he had formed for himself in his inmost heart ; he grew tired of a life which for him had no object, the hours seemed long and weary ; yet he had no particular desire to quit the earth, for he knew not that in the other world he would find what he so wished for in this ; he was only indifferent to all things around him, and the idea of losing a throne he had never desired to mount, troubled him but little.

He listened, however, with more interest than had been his wont for a long time to a strange

proposition which some of the princes of the council had thought of, to whom the idea of a restoration of the old monarchy seemed fatal for their own private interests, and which was to the effect that the young king should marry Zorayda, the only daughter and sole heiress of El-Abbas, the chief of the great clan of the Abencerrages ; by which means he would at once obtain for his supporter one of the ablest generals of which the Moorish army could boast, and thus increase his popularity with the people ; for the Abencerrages were considered by all classes in Granada as the strictest Moslems, and as most devoted in every way to the good of the country.

“She is the greatest heiress in Granada,” concluded Soliman, who had been the one chosen to broach the subject to the young king ; “she is the greatest heiress in Granada, and her dowry is as nought to her smiles and her charms, which are enough to turn the head of the wisest men.”

Muley Ahmet, who had listened until now with some curiosity, burst out laughing,—

“Then methinks you had better marry her yourself, fool ! I will not have my rest broken by all the houris of your Prophet’s paradise. Do you not see that if I possess not the people’s trust, I am unworthy to be their king ? Do you believe that to buy the glare, gloss, and glitter which constitute this empty show of royalty, I should be justified in selling myself to the Abencerrage ? I

will listen to no new plans ; pray give up all your vain schemes ; no more of this. Fate gave me this throne, let fate preserve it for me."

How little he knew that by these words he was sealing his own doom !

El Abbas, who until now had remained in Granada, and who, although he had never openly joined in the revolution, yet seemed not displeased with its object ; now left the capital, and, accompanied by his fair daughter, betook himself to the town of Malaga, where old Mohamed still lingered with the queen and his seraglio, which had joined him some days previously. This sudden journey of the great chief of the Abencerrages occurring, as it did, directly after the king's refusal to marry Zorayda, would seem to point to his knowledge of the defeated plan of the princes of the divan. The real truth of this, however, was never known, but with the final departure of El Abbas all possible hope seemed to have been banished for ever for the cause of the poor young monarch.

Every new sun brought news to his palace of the desertion of some chief or prince who had retired to Malaga and joined the cause of the old king. In vain he now tried to alter his policy ; in vain did he despatch letter after letter to the Christian kings of Castille or Arragon to solicit their aid ; nothing could avail him.

Granada now presented for the second time the

appearance of a camp ; the more peaceful citizens with their families had left the town, as the nobles had done a few days before. The shops in the busy Yacatin were closed, and their masters had taken refuge in the least exposed quarters. The Abaycin and all the other populous quarters of the city were deserted by all, except by the armed mob, who paraded the empty streets crying loudly for vengeance. And as if to render the aspect of the city still more alarming, the Moslem priests from the various mosques rushed from street to street, encouraging the already infuriated rabble, and begging of them to strike for liberty and the Prophet.

The soldiers of some of the tribes had already joined the throng ; more deadly weapons than stones aided the wrath of the multitude ; javelins and lances shone in the mid-day sun ; darts and arrows darkened the air ; the bridges over the Darro and the Genil were crowded with armed men ; the brave Moorish foot soldiers opposed the mob step by step, but they were beaten back, and the road was strewn with the corpses of those they left behind ; and the many new companies which poured from the Alhambra only added to the slaughter.

The fury of the multitude increased ; on they advanced across the broad square of Vivarambla, and passed the noble gates that surrounded it ; on they came, from lane, from alley, from hovel,

from palace ; on they advanced towards the sacred hill, their passions excited by their numbers, for theirs was an array of thousands, and their cries made the very buildings they passed resound with their voices, and echo their wrath.

And now a voice louder than all the rest was heard shrieking,—

“To the Alhambra !” And this new cry was soon repeated in every direction, and added to those of “Down with the tyrant,” “Down with the traitor,” “Woe to Granada,” which had rung through the hot oppressive air of that burning day.

One rush was made towards the Alhambra—one rush—only one—but one that carried every thing before it, as for every man that the soldiers on the walls pushed off, a hundred would follow. The gates were soon torn down, and the people of Granada stood once more within the sacred palace of their kings.

A silence—a silence of death, now reigned, but only for one instant.

Muley Ahmet in full armour, though without his helmet, and holding the national banner, embroidered with the pomegranate and the crescent, in his right hand, had suddenly appeared before the people. Not one muscle of his powerful frame betrayed fear ; not one feature in his noble face expressed anger or even sadness ; but one

tear, one solitary tear, fell down his manly cheek. Was it for Granada? Was it for himself? No one knew, and no one had even time to ask himself, for the next minute Muley Ahmet Ben Mohamed had ceased to exist.

VII.

“Deem not the irrevocable Past,
As wholly wasted, wholly vain,
If, rising on its wrecks, at last
To something nobler we attain.”

LONGFELLOW.

You were mine at last !

Death had united us never more to part ; in less than one second your noble spirit had passed from one world to the other, from death to life ; from the hands of the infuriated populace to the arms of your celestial love—and yet some men mourned your death and deplored your wasted life !

And now, dearest Walter, farewell for to-night. I have now told you all the principal events of that sad existence of trial and probation ; and the history of our spirits through the ages is fast drawing to a close. I will come to you ere long, and inform you of what followed your death as Muley Ahmet, when you were at last united to me ; and from which time the intense love, may be said to date, which now draws us towards one another—though again the inhabitants of different worlds. Adios !”

NIGHT THE THIRTEENTH.

“ For once, gazing on thee, it flash’d on my soul,
All that secret ! I saw in a vision the whole
Vast design of the ages ; what was and shall be !
Hands unseen raised the veil of a great mystery
For one moment. I saw, and I heard ; and my heart
Bore witness within me to infinite art,
In infinite power proving infinite love ;
Caught the great choral chant, mark’d the dread pageant
move—
The divine Whence and Whither of life ! ”

OWEN MEREDITH.

I.

“Love is the fulfilling of the law.”

ST. PAUL.

My dearest husband—for thanks to the almighty being whom none can comprehend—yet whose bright life-giving presence occupies all space and guides each atom—I may now call you thus for evermore. My dearest husband, as I told you the other night, we two were now but one, one never more to become two again, though perhaps separated at times for the good of our future welfare, for we were anything yet but perfect.

When the barbarous hand of the murderers released your soul so suddenly from its mortal frame, and your free spirit emerging through the many doors which the daggers of the regicides had opened in your body, with one spring, quitted for ever the marble halls of the Alhambra and all the petty cares of mortal life; you found yourself in my arms, in the loving arms of her who for so many years had watched over you with devoted care, and shaped her life to yours as tenderly and assiduously as your guardian angel might have done.

You were mine at last, and you recognised me

at once ; your noble soul hesitated not ; for to meet was to love, and though no words passed between us, our immortal spirits swore, from that instant, eternal though unspoken love for one another.

And thus we two met at last. No longer the weak-minded, faithless Recesvinto and the cruel revengeful Berenguela ; but the inseparable lovers Walter and Conchita, even as we are at present ; for our love has neither changed nor wavered since that day ; though we have both progressed in many ways, and grown gradually from ignorance into knowledge side by side.

For many many years we lived together, travelling over the earth in all directions ; journeying here and there through the boundless regions of space, yet always together, carrying with us our world of uninterrupted happiness wherever we went. Around us, all seemed beautiful and bright, the very air seemed an atmosphere of love ; a new existence had commenced for us, and when the sad remembrance of our past life stole sometimes like a spectre through our spirits' memory, it all seemed so distant, so undefined, so impossible, so like a dream in fact, that it daarkened not our present happiness, and only added to the enjoyment of the morrow.

Thus days, months, and years passed, at least they passed for the poor toiling men and women of the earth below us, but not for us ; for we counted

not the daily evolutions of that little planet, and whole centuries seemed to us but one short day, too short to communicate to each other half we felt in our hearts, and would fain have made mutual property.

Our happiness knew no end, no bounds, no limit; for we lived independently of time and space, and their laws were foreign to us.

We were so happy. Oh, so happy! that mortal lovers could never even imagine the full extent of our superhuman happiness; and yet, what had we done to merit it? What had we performed to deserve it? We had lived upon the earth several times, we had suffered there, and worked and learnt many lessons, it is true; but what can poor man perform that will ever suffice to deserve the happiness of eternal love?

Thus we enjoyed our unlimited happiness; but we understood it not, we were like two children, happy in the uncontrolled indulgence of our mutual desires; free to accomplish all we felt, but unable, utterly unable, to analyze our feelings; too inexperienced in spirit-life to comprehend the nature of our desires. And so the all-powerful and all-just being, who so tenderly watched over our destiny, determined in his wise forethought that we should be separated; separated at least for a few short years, that we might learn the true value of our love. And thus it came about that we were once more incarnated upon the earth. We knew that

a change was coming upon us, and we felt that this change was for our good ; but of its precise nature we were at the time almost completely ignorant.

The time arrived at last when we had to part ; it came, alas ! only too swiftly ; for though we knew that the end was very near, yet we hardly spoke of it, as if we had been quite unconscious of the events of the external world. The shadows of approaching materiality gradually grew denser and denser about us. We felt that at any moment, like a sudden cloud that drifts across the sun-light, earth's material veil might fall upon us and leave us, though perhaps still side by side in spirit, yet worlds asunder in body.

I was incarnated once more upon the earth, and this time in that part of Europe called France ; and you, though also incarnated about the same time, were placed in another country. It seemed but a small trial, to bear this temporary separation, after all I had suffered already for you ; but nevertheless it was hard as long as I retained the memory of the past, but this however soon diminished, when, with the new born body I had come to animate, new organs and new faculties caused me once more to forget the past of my spirit and the bitterness of our separation for the time being, thus considerably diminishing the hardships of my trial.

I was born in an exalted position, a palace was

my home, Henry II. my father, and Catherine de Medicis my mother ; and as I suppose you know already through the medium of history all about these high personages, I need scarcely describe them to you ; and, without further delay, I will begin to narrate to you the principal events of that particular existence.

As a daughter of France, I was brought up in the royal palace of the Louvre, with all the care and attention which was due to the high position of my parents. My proud Mother, the queen, I seldom saw ; she lived principally in her own apartments while in Paris ; and often retired to the country, of which she was particularly fond. Catherine de Medicis in those days was not yet the great regent-queen she afterwards became ; who for the space of three whole reigns ruled supreme in France ; and whose great political mind governed almost the whole of Europe ; in the days of my early youth, of which I am now speaking, she was but the forgotten, deceived, insulted wife of Henry I. ; whose real queen, acknowledged as such throughout France, was the peerless Diane de Poitiers.

But there was another queen in Paris at the time ; a queen far fairer and younger, than either the young wife or the fascinating favourite of the king, and this youthful queen was Marie Stuart, the promised bride of my brother, Francis the Dauphin, and it was with her, that I was brought

up and educated in the gloomy and ancient palace of the Louvre.

One of my most vivid recollections of those happy days of my youth, is that of the marriage of my brother to the beautiful Queen of Scots, and of the ceremonies and festivities accompanying it. I was then about twelve years old.

In a beautiful chamber in that part of the royal palace set apart for the children of France, and which to please and flatter the favourite had been adorned with half-moons, and pictures representing various events in the fabulous history of Diana ; were assembled on the morning of the 20th of May 1557, the young bride Marie Stuart and her bridegroom, the Dauphin Francis ; with his brothers and sisters, and their private friends and attendants ; awaiting the arrival of the king to form a procession to the Old Church of St Germain L'Auxerrois, across the broad square in front of the palace, where the marriage was to be solemnized.

It would have been curious for one gifted with the power of seeing into the future, to have entered that apartment, and beheld in the small space which one single glance could comprise, the beings, who, although perfectly ignorant of it at the time, were later on to hold in their hands the destinies of Europe. For, amongst those eight children, there were no less than three kings and three queens :—the Dauphin who became Francis II. ; Charles,

afterwards Charles IX. ; the little Henry, who, on the death of his two brothers, also reigned under the name of Henry III. ; Marguerite de Valois, the witty princess who married the king of Navarre ; and who after the death of all her brothers also mounted the French throne with her husband Henry IV. ; Marie Stuart who was twice queen, and mother of a long line of unfortunate kings ; and myself ; at the time the little princess Elisabeth, who in her turn was also destined to mount a throne, and wear a royal crown ; though my short reign was scarcely happier than those of my three brothers, and whose life was only less miserable than that of Marie Stuart, the young queen of Scotland and France, whose marriage we were assembled to celebrate.

Had we known at the time the great honours and the great misfortunes that awaited each of us in the future, I scarcely think we should have been so happy and light-hearted as we were at that moment. Oh how wise it is that we should ignore our future as well as our past !

As it still wanted nearly an hour before the time appointed for the ceremony ; and as the king, who was to have joined us in the private apartments before we formed the procession in the great gallery, had not yet made his appearance ; we, with all the glee and high spirits of children, began to romp and play about the chamber, to the great dismay of our governesses

and ladies-in-waiting, who were for the most part advanced in years; and particularly to that of the Lady Lennox, the young queen's lady of honour, whose ideas about the behaviour of princes and princesses were certainly very much opposed to ours.

Madame Coni, my governess, was, thank God, a very different woman; and although there were many years between us, yet we were great friends nevertheless; and *she*, in a general way, quite entered into our games and pastimes; but on this particular occasion, she too seemed to think it necessary to disapprove of our undignified behaviour, as she thought our romps would hardly improve the rich robes we wore, and the costly jewels with which we had been adorned for the occasion.

Marie Stuart, the eldest of the party, was standing before a large Venetian glass, giving the last touches to her bridal attire, and unconsciously contemplating her lovely face in that mirror which had certainly never reflected a fairer one. At the other end of the room, the younger princes were playing battledore and shuttlecock, while the bridegroom, Francis, stood leaning upon a high-backed arm-chair languidly contemplating his lovely bride.

My sister Margaret and I, who had been running about the room in a wild manner, certainly not calculated to improve our gorgeous dresses

and long trains, suddenly stopped before the glass as we unexpectedly beheld the image of our brother reflected in it behind that of Marie.

"How nice it must be to get married," exclaimed Margaret, turning to me; "I wonder when our turn will come, and if we shall get such handsome men for husbands as our brother the Dauphin."

Marie Stuart turned round, and smiled graciously at Francis, who had turned away and blushed greatly at his sister's remark, she said, "You are too young to think of marrying anyone, Margaret; but if I am not much mistaken, we shall soon have another bride in the family." This she said with such a decided glance at me that all those around turned and fixed their eyes upon me.

"What have you heard? Do tell us all about it!" was shouted on all sides.

"Why?" answered the youthful queen, rearranging a diamond brooch on the white satin body of her dress which had just come unfastened. "The other day when I was paying my usual visit to the queen, I heard two very grave-looking personages discussing the chances of an alliance between our sister Elisabeth and the young prince of the Asturias."

"With little Don Carlos?" shouted the noisy Charles. "If I were you, Elisabeth, I should have nothing to do with Spain. The air of

Madrid, I assure you, is most unhealthy for the family of Valois."

"Surely my sister would never think of marrying the grandson of that cruel emperor who kept our glorious grandfather prisoner for such a long time!" This was said by the Dauphin, who now advanced and joined our circle.

"You may say what you like," continued the bride, "but I assure you that something not very unlike it is on the *tapis*, and that our ministers will not consider it such a bad match as you seem to think it. Why, Elisabeth," she said, turning towards me, "you will then be queen of Spain, just fancy!"

"Perhaps our learned tutor can tell us something more definite and certain," said the Dauphin, turning towards Jacques Amoyot, who was in one of the recesses formed by the large windows, talking in a low voice to Mademoiselle de Sevres, one of our maids of honour. If anybody knows anything about it I am sure he must."

Amoyot, who had not heard our previous conversation, was obliged to be in his turn informed of this great news, which, however, did not produce such a great effect upon him as I had expected; for I firmly believed this news about my marriage to be only a joke of Marie Stuart's.

"I have indeed heard something about this affair," he answered, moving now out of the recess, and advancing towards us, "and I even believe

that an ambassador is coming all the way from London, where the Spanish king now is with his wife, the queen of England, to see her royal highness, Elisabeth de Valois; and to arrange a betrothal between her and the young prince of the Asturias. I hope your highness," he continued, turning towards me, "will have no objection to this marriage."

"I! oh, none whatever," I answered laughingly, "I think it must be awfully nice to be a queen."

"Well, I do not know," muttered Francis, thoughtfully, "I do not believe our poor mother is particularly happy."

"Ah, but look at our little queen here, I am sure *she* is the very picture of happiness." As I said this a shrill cry pierced my ears, and caused me to turn round in alarm towards the young bride, from whom it had proceeded. It seems that the shuttlecock thrown into the air with too great force by the little Duc d' Alençon from the other end of the apartment had fallen heavily upon Marie's head, displacing, as it fell, the little crown on the back of her head.

"This is a bad sign!" she said, turning pale, "and the morning of my marriage too; but I will not give way to superstitious fears of any kind; it was very foolish of me to scream like that, and frighten you all, dear children; let us forget all about it," and with a smile, which I could see was forced, she threw back the shuttlecock towards

the little prince, who, unconscious of his sister's feelings, was laughing aloud with his two brothers, Charles and Henry, and enjoying the general dismay he had perhaps not quite accidentally caused.

At that moment the great folding doors at the end of the room were thrown open, and the king made his appearance, arrayed in all the pomp of royalty. Soon afterwards the procession was formed, and we all marched in solemn state to the church, where the marriage was solemnized with all due ceremony; and all seemed to have forgotten the incidents of the morning, excepting myself, who often during the ceremony, and afterwards during the long banquet that followed it, found myself unconsciously thinking of the young Don Carlos, the prince, that people seemed to think I was one day to marry.

At three in the afternoon a grand tournament was to take place in honour of the festivities, in that corner, which in those days was formed in the rue St Antoine by the royal stables; and which for occasions of this kind had been furnished with raised seats for the numerous spectators who generally assisted at these *jousts*. At the extreme end a large platform had been raised for the queen and the court, and it was here that we all took our seats to witness the gallantry and prowess of our royal father, who took advantage of this opportunity to break a few lances in honour

. . . not of Marie Stuart, the lovely bride of the Dauphin . . . nor yet of his handsome and stately Queen, Catherine de Medicis, but in honour of the Duchess de Valentinois, the fascinating Diane de Poitiers !

II.

Love is no deity except when twice borne,
Sprung from two hearts, each yearning unto each,
Until they meet, though Hades yawn'd between them,
Thou art to me the world's one man, and I,
For good or ill, to thee the world's one woman.

TIME passed on, and the expected ambassador, who was coming from London to ask my hand in marriage for the prince of the Asturias, never made his appearance ; but instead, and a few months later, a young Spanish cavalier arrived at the Louvre from Madrid, whose secret mission (for openly he came only as a courier bearing friendly letters from the King of Spain for King Henry), the court gossip said was to prepare the way for the formal negotiations which every one now expected would soon begin between the two courts on my account.

Don Cesar de Castro, such was the name of this private courier, was first presented to me in the apartments of the queen, where we passed the evening two or three times a week according to an old French court custom ; and where various amusements, such as private theatricals, games, music, poetry, and at times even dancing, were provided for the entire court, which very often

made political gatherings of these friendly receptions.

Knowing the private reasons of Don Cesar's arrival at Paris, I naturally took no common interest in his words and general behaviour; and his person, as a specimen of my future Spanish subjects, was the object of my frequent contemplation.

I found him a decidedly handsome man; he was still very young, although, as it was said, several years older than Don Carlos himself, who was even younger than I. He was tall and slim, with a dark complexion, his features were handsome, though rather sharp, his eyes, bright and of a light hazel, rare in a Spaniard, were rather small and deeply set, surmounted and crowned by a broad and lofty brow. The lower part of his face was also massive, and to a physiognomist would have spoken of great firmness and strength of character; but the general expression of his face was bright and gay. Inexperienced as I naturally was, and too young to know much of men, and of men's characters, that fine open face impressed me deeply. "If Don Carlos is only as good-looking as his messenger," I thought, "I am sure I shall love him very much and be very happy as his wife;" and from the first I took so much to Don Cesar that we subsequently became great friends.

As the principal part of his mission concerned

me, he was naturally allowed the free access to my apartments, and thus we were permitted to hold long conversations together, during which, in his fine, highly figurative, and at times perhaps too exaggerated, language, he described to me all the wonders of Spain, the beauties of Aranjuez, the charms of Granada, and the gorgeous halls of Madrid and Toledo ; in which, he often repeated, I was destined to reign as queen, and become the shining star around which all the other stars would rotate.

Although but a girl in years, my position, and perhaps also the advantages of the superior education I had received, and my peculiar character, which was always a serious and sedate one, had rendered me anything but indifferent to these flattering speeches, and while most girls of my age would have amused themselves with dolls and playthings, I only felt happy when in the company of the handsome Spaniard.

But do not think, dear Walter, for one moment, that I fell in love with him. I might certainly have done so, had he not possessed a charm which rendered all such danger impossible, and need I tell you that this wondrous amulet, this mysterious talisman, was the portrait of his master ? The portrait of the young, handsome, bright-eyed, clear-complexioned boy, who was so soon to become my husband and my king, Don

Carlos of Asturias ! But I need not tell you any more, for I suppose you have already guessed who was Don Carlos, or if you had not discovered your identity with that young prince, I am sure you would have done so had you seen the effect those faithfully portrayed features produced on my heart the first time I beheld them.

I could not have explained to you the why nor the wherefore of this sudden and unexpected emotion at the sight of that portrait ; indeed, I could not understand my own feelings at the time ; that pale, refined face, those deep, large blue eyes, those thick curls of fair hair, that prominent chin, and that mouth with its full red lips, that would only have indicated to any one else a delicate pretty boy ; had for *me* a language which I felt better than I could express ; and which awoke in me a passion I could not understand ; it was that my spirit recognised in the fair face of the Infante of Castille, the spirit of my much beloved Muley Ahmet, for whom I had suffered so much during his last earthly existence, whom I could never forget, whom henceforward I must recognise and love in whatever form or shape I found him upon my earthly path.

But, then, who was Don Cesar ? For he, too, inspired me from the very first with feelings, if not as strong and tender, yet most earnest and affectionate. This very question I often asked myself when sitting with him in the lofty tapestried

chambers of the Louvre, or under the old trees of the forest of Fontainebleau, where we often wandered together, in earnest conversation, forgetful of all court etiquette, as if we had been old friends, and had known each other from the remotest past; and so it was—though at the time we both ignored the cause of our mutual sympathy. But I will not keep you any longer in suspense; know at once, therefore, that Don Cesar de Castro was no other than the Roman Martinian, the Goth Don Fruela, and in this present life our own dear child, Raphael Carlton. Can you understand now the cause of our sympathy?

The arrangements for my marriage were progressing most favourably, Don Cesar confessed to me that he had been sent by Don Carlos himself—whose bosom friend he said he was—to see me and to give him a detailed and truthful account of my person and character, and to see whether he believed us indeed suited to each other. “For,” he told me on two or three occasions, and each time in almost the same words, “my master has some very peculiar ideas on all these things, and although in every other respect a most dutiful son and a worthy prince, devoted to the welfare of his country, he would never consent to marry a princess whom he did not believe he could bring himself honestly to love.”

“Don Carlos, then,” I said, “will trust you implicitly, and abide by your judgment?”

"Yes," he answered, "because we have lived so much together that our tastes have at last become almost the same; indeed, some people would make us believe that we actually are brothers."

"Brothers!" I exclaimed, surprised, "then you are a son of Philip of Spain."

He smiled, and in a half whispered tone replied, "There are things much more impossible than that."

"And the king . . . ?"

"Loves me very much."

"And does the Infante recognise the relationship?"

"The love we bear each other is quite independent of all blood ties."

"And do you really think, Don Cesar," I asked anxiously, "that Don Carlos will like me?"

"I feel convinced of it, your Highness; and in his last letter to me, he already tells me that the sight of your portrait, which his father sent him not long since, together with my descriptions of your personal charms and accomplishments, have half turned his head—he has fallen in love with your royal highness already."

"And *I* too," I thought, "I too have fallen in love with him." But I dared not say anything, even to Don Cesar, for it seemed so absurd,

having never even seen him. At least, so I imagined in my ignorance of our past.

My father, King Henry, was delighted with the prospect of an alliance with Spain the parliament also seemed to think such a marriage between the two great rival houses of Austria and Valois the only prospect of peace ; for the two nations had never been on very good terms since the fatal campaign of Pavia, when the old Emperor Carlos—still living at the time of these arrangements—had taken the French king a prisoner to Madrid. And they also thought of the relations this marriage would establish with England ; whose queen was the wife, and to all intents and purposes, the devoted slave of Philip, and also with the Emperor Ferdinand of Germany, his uncle. Even Diane de Poitiers found nothing to object to in the prospect of this marriage, and all things seemed to be progressing rapidly towards a favourable termination of the affair, when, for some reason, for which history has since tried to account in the most plausible way, but which I never could understand myself, my father declared war with Spain.

The Duke de Guise, at the head of twenty thousand men, marched immediately upon Italy, but Philip was prepared for war, and the Duke of Alba and the Duke of Savoy, at the head of two large armies, advanced to meet him. While Mary Tudor, the English Queen, also took this

opportunity of declaring war with France, who had dared to declare war with Spain ; and from that moment, all hope of my marriage with Don Carlos seemed to have come to a premature and most unexpected end.

III.

“ Oh world !

Oh men ! what are ye, and our best designs,
That we must work by crime to punish crime ?
And slay, as if death had but this one gate,
When a few years would make the sword superfluous ? ”

LORD BYRON.

YET, in spite of the war, which now raged all over the country, Don Cesar still remained in Paris. “ Have you not lost all hope of ever seeing me Queen of Spain ? ” I said to him, one day as he entered my apartments rather unexpectedly.

“ On the contrary ; my hopes are greater than ever ; this unfortunate war cannot last for ever ; a peace must be signed sooner or later, and your Royal Highness will be the pure dove who will seal the peace for ever between the two countries—and as a proof that I sincerely believe your Highness will soon be my queen, I take the liberty of to-day bringing to your royal feet, two unfortunate subjects of your new kingdom, whom the war has caused to fly to France for safety, and who now humbly crave the protection of the Princess Elisabeth.”

I readily agreed to take under my protection

these two unfortunate ladies, particularly when I found out that one of them was my friend's mother, Doña Luz de Castro, a Spanish lady of the highest rank, who had been living for the last few years in a convent of Northern Italy.

"I am ready to take your mother and her friend under my protection, Don Cesar," I said, "and to do anything I can for them ; but you know that my power is most limited, and that if you had sought the favour of the Queen of Scots, or better still, that of the Duchess of Valentinois, for them, they would have fared much better than under my care."

But he would not hear of any other protection for them than mine, and so I readily agreed that they should enter my household as ladies-of-honour, the only way in which I could—under the circumstances—protect them during their stay in France.

Doña Luz de Castro was a woman who, though no longer young, retained the traces of great beauty ; her fine tall figure still preserved much of the grace it must have had formerly ; and her clearly cut features were still beautiful ; but her face was haggard, her fine large eyes sunken, her colourless cheeks fallen, and in every part of that still handsome countenance one could distinctly read the unmistakable lines caused by grief and sorrow, which, probably, the eternal fastings, penance, and self-inflicted mortifications of the

convent life which she had lately led, had helped to deepen on that, perhaps, once matchless face.

Her companion was still a mere girl, and, she said, no relation whatever to her. It would appear that Sœur Blanche—this was the name by which she had been known at the convent—had entered the sisterhood very early in life, when quite a little child. A lady arrived one day at the convent door in a superb coach, bearing this child in her arms; she had requested to see the lady abbess, with whom she had remained only a few minutes; but it was whispered that she had given the good mother a letter from a very high personage, the contents of which had removed all obstacles, and from that moment Sœur Blanche had remained in the convent, where her natural sweetness of character had won the hearts of the nuns. When the soldiers of the Duke de Guise entered Turin and took possession of all the country around, each lady flew in her own direction, Doña Luz, knowing her son to be in Paris, naturally sought refuge with him, and as the poor little Sœur Blanche would have been left alone in the now deserted and desecrated convent, she had taken charge of her, and had brought her with her to France.

“This is all I know respecting the poor girl, madam,” she concluded. “But I think the strange way in which she was left at the convent, justifies us in supposing her, without further proof,

the natural daughter of some great personages, who by consecrating their child to God, would atone for the sin of her birth. Your Highness now knows all I know myself about Blanche, and I can only add that she is as good as she is pretty, and as pious and as religious as she is good."

I consulted Madame Coni, my old governess, as to what I should do with these two ladies, who seemed so entirely to depend upon me. She at first hesitated a little about the propriety of making ladies-of-honour of two nuns, but as neither Doña Luz nor Blanche had ever taken any vows, and as neither of them seemed at all anxious to join any other sisterhood, she at last agreed with me that the best plan would be to keep them near me—Doña Luz as lady-in-waiting and mistress of the Spanish language, which I thought it my duty to learn, in case I should one day become Queen of Spain ; and Blanche as maid-of-honour, her age as well as her disposition making her so well-suited to be my companion, as she afterwards became when sorrows, which afflicted us both, drew us still closer to each other, and made us really dear friends.

It was about this time that the dreadful news was received in Paris of the defeat of the French at Saint-Quentin, where it seemed the Constable de Montmorency had been completely defeated. This, for us, dreadful news, threw the whole of France into the wildest state of anxiety, and my

father quite gave himself up to despair, and would have marched to meet the Count d' Egmont, who was said to be advancing on Paris, had not the fair Diane, as usual, proved too strong a magnet for him, and retained him at the Louvre.

The Admiral de Coligny, now left alone, and almost without troops, in the ruined town of St Quentin, might have to surrender at any moment; and then the Spanish, English, Flemish, and Italian armies, would march without further delay upon Paris. We all knew this, so you may well imagine the consternation of the court at that time.

But, after all, we had no great cause for fear, as while the great Kaiser Karl was fiercely asking the messenger who brought him the news of the victory of San Lorenzo to the monastery of Yuste, "Is my son at Paris?" the more prudent and politic Philip was making a treaty of peace, by which he knew he could obtain more from Henry, paralysed at that moment by the success of the Spanish arms, than by actually taking possession of his capital and his palace.

But what did I care what Spain won, or what France lost, if through this treaty Don Carlos at last became my husband!

I must not forget to mention to you, my dear Walter, that all this time Don Cesar—who now came to the Louvre almost every day—had been carrying on a most desperate flirtation with

Blanche, my new maid of honour, whose great intimacy with Doña Luz—his mother, and whom she almost looked upon as her mother, for she had indeed been one to her—threw them constantly together, while in my private apartments, or in those of the Queen. It seemed only natural that they should fall in love, for indeed they actually seemed made for one another; but there is one great reason why they *did* fall in love so rapidly, which, if we all ignored at the time, I think it better you should now know at once, as I am letting you into all the secret plots and underplots that have governed our lives in the past, and am, so to speak, showing you the hidden strings which put in motion the puppets, whose performances I am narrating to you, for it is emphatically true that the world is but a stage after all, and as the son of our greatest modern novelist expresses it :

“ If this world be indeed, as ’t was said, but a stage,
The dress only is changed ’twixt the acts of an age.
From the dark tiring-chamber behind straight reissue
With new masks the old mummers ; the very same tissue,
Of passionate antics that moved through the play,
With new parts to fulfil and new phrases to say,
The plot grows more complex, more actors appear,
And the moral perchance glimpses out, there and here,
More clearly, approaching the ultimate fall
Of the curtain that yet hangs unseen.”

You will remember no doubt that when speaking of that earthly life of ours which took place at the beginning of our modern era, in the fertile

plains of what is now the holy land *par-excellence*, your great friend the handsome Roman centurion Martinian, after conceiving a wild passion for Marie Magdalene settled down at last—through the intervention of that very woman he had so loved, and whom he had so little deserved—into the prosaic husband of the Lady Olympia, the fair niece of the Cæsars, whose influence at the Roman Court soon raised him high in the favour of Tiberius, whose policy was at all times to enrich and help the different members of the Augustan family, whose representative he was, since the great Augustus had adopted him as his son and heir.

Thus Martinian, who but for his marriage to Olympia, would most probably have remained all his life an obscure Centurion in some distant province of the empire, owed much to his wife ; while she in her turn, more and more in love every day with her handsome husband, could refuse him nothing. Thus it was that though at first greatly prejudiced against his wife, whose overpowering vanity and frivolity he could not but despise, he had never quite forgotten the superior charms of the Magdalen ; yet he owed so much to his fair companion, and had so many interests in common with her, that in the course of time, the task of trying to love her, which at first had been so irksome for him, gradually grew a pleasant one, and after a time what was once a grievous yoke

became a companionable and even sympathetic tie.

After their death, their paths still lay side by side, he knew it would have been a sin to think again of the Magdalene who now occupied such a high place in heaven, and whom he now revered more than loved ; so he devoted himself entirely to the fair and sweet spirit of Olympia, and thus the earthly marriage which, on his part at least, had been entirely one of *convenance*, became in heaven, where all the material causes that had prompted it had ceased, a real love union of two souls. Since then another earth life had seen them again side by side, and now the purer, better spirit of Don Cesar recognised in the sweet little protégée of his mother, the soul of her he had at first despised, and afterwards so loved, Olympia, his predestined wife.

Thus are marriages consummated in heaven, whose origin has generally commenced on earth.

On the night of the 12th of January 1558, there was one of those receptions in the private apartments of Catherine de Medicis, of which I have already spoken to you, and which were always welcome to me, for they formed perhaps the only break of any consequence in the general monotony of my life.

On this particular occasion, the queen's saloons were crowded, the king as well as his son and

his young wife, together with all the other princes and princesses of the royal house, and of the houses of Lorraine and Bourbon, were present in spite of the melancholy state of affairs. But if the assemblage was brilliant, being composed of some of the greatest men in France, and adorned by the presence of the two greatest beauties Europe could boast of at that moment, Marie Stuart, and Diane de Poitiers, it was anything but gay, for we all felt more anxiety for the future welfare of the kingdom than we perhaps cared to show.

But independently of the war going on outside, and which was so disastrous for France, there was another war going on in secret, and in the very apartments of the royal palace, which was almost as dangerous for the health of the state. I am speaking as you perhaps have guessed of the rivalry which existed between the Constable de Montmorency and the Duke de Guise, the two great French generals of the day, a rivalry which had actually divided the interest of all the statesman of the Court to such an extent as to render them almost careless of the consequences of the war which was raging all around them.

In one corner of the salon the partisans of a third party had collected around the King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé; these were the Huguenots, and amongst them I could see talking to La Renandie, the Admiral de Coligny, who had only lately returned from St Quentin.

All these men belonging to the different parties that disputed amongst themselves the government of France, and drawn together in the apartments of Catherine de Medicis perhaps for the first time as friends, could not make the assembly particularly gay; besides both the king and the favourite,—who in those days was more courted and thought of than the queen herself, though that queen was Catherine de Medicis,—were sad and preoccupied. For the last three weeks, all their thoughts lay in the direction of Calais, where the Duke de Guise had gone to meet the English army sent by Queen Mary. But if the hopes of both were centered in the result of the siege of that important town which had now belonged to the English for so many years, their motives were very different. The king feared a defeat. The favourite a triumph.

This was easy to account for. If the Duke de Guise conquered the English at Calais, France would owe its safety to him; and the Constable, the friend and ally of Diane de Poitiers, would have to surrender the highest post in the Court, a post which he had always occupied, to his rival.

On the other hand the hopes of the Queen of Scots, as well as those of her young husband, were entirely centered on the success of her uncle the Duke. I tell you this to show you how little all those people cared for the welfare of their country,

and how much their own interests overpowered their patriotism.

I was seated with my two sisters, Marguerite and Claude, near the queen, while the king himself stood at the other end of the long saloon, leaning over the chair occupied by the Duchess de Valentinois, when the principal doors were thrown open, and a herald announced a messenger sent by the Duke de Guise from the seat of war.

Every one in the room rose, so great was the anxiety experienced by all; the old Constable turned pale, while his eyes followed the direction of those of the favourite; the Cardinal de Lorraine, brother of Guise, smiled significantly, looking towards that part of the saloon where sat the two queens.

In the midst of this general commotion, the messenger from Calais entered the room, and with the prescribed formalities laid at Henry's feet half-a-dozen English flags, together with the keys of Calais.

The Duke de Guise had conquered.

IV.

“ Can this be the long-expected end, after all ? ”

SHAKESPEARE.

AFTER seven days of siege, and three desperate assaults, Lord Wentworth, the English governor of Calais, had surrendered the city to the French.

Two hundred years had passed since that day when Edward III. had taken the old city from Philip de Valois, and Calais now returned to the possession of the French once more.

Victory seemed now to favour the French, at least as far as the English part of the invading army was concerned ; but soon afterwards the French met with a great reverse. Paul de Termes, after having taken possession of Dunkerque, of Berque-Saint-Viriox, and Newport, was totally defeated by the Count d'Egmont, and the French General was taken prisoner by the enemy.

It was then, and only then, that negotiations for peace were begun by the Cabinet of the Louvre, the Constable de Montmorency fearing still greater triumphs for the Duke de Guise ; while his brother Dandelot, having openly declared himself Protestant, and consequently lost all favour with the king, added all his entreaties

to those of Diane de Poitiers, who also feared the influence of the Princess of Lorraine over the king, and therefore entreated Henry to negotiate a peace. The Guises themselves, who now feared to carry on this unfortunate war any longer, also entreated the monarch to come to a speedy understanding with Philip; whilst I, who was too much interested in the conclusion of a peace between Spain and France not to wish it with all my heart, added my prayers to theirs.

Henry, following this advice, asked for an armistice. The Cardinal de Lorraine, Montmorency, and the Bishop of Orleans, Secretary of State, were sent, therefore, to the Congress of Sercamp in Cambresis, where the King of Spain was represented by the Prince of Orange, the Duke of Alba, Ruy Gomez de Silva, and Grandville. The English, who were now only too anxious to obtain peace, and Philibert of Savoy, who desired to regain his kingdom which Francis I. had united to France, also sent their ambassadors.

A great difficulty, however, came in the way, and for a long time we all thought the Congress at Cambresis would never be able to arrange a treaty to which the four sovereigns interested could honestly put their signatures. The King of France would hardly consent to give up Metz or Toul, nor yet give back Calais to the English—a restitution which Philip, as husband of the

English queen, insisted upon; for its loss affected her most deeply and cut her to the heart. Things seemed as if they never would be definitively settled, and the Congress at Cambresis had almost given up all hopes of ever coming to an understanding, when Mary Tudor died of grief and sorrow. This poor Queen died unregretted, as she had lived unloved, and we were all heartily glad she was out of the way; for Philip, who at her death lost all possible interest in English affairs, would no longer make any more difficulties as to the possession of Calais; so her death filled me with joy. Ah! how little did I *then* know that her death, happening just at that moment, would change the whole of my future fate, rendering all my hopes of happiness vain and empty dreams!

The peace was signed at last, and the famous treaty of Chateau Cambresis drawn out. By it France was to retain Metz, Toul, and Verduin, with all that part of France; and she was to remain in possession of Calais for eight years, engaging herself to pay to England eight hundred thousand crowns of gold, if at the end of these eight years it was not restored to them (I suppose I need not tell you that this stronghold of France was never given up to the English, neither were the eight hundred thousand crowns of gold paid, now that Philip had no longer any interest in the affairs of England); and, finally, San Quentin and Turin, with all that part of Piedmont,

was to remain for the time in the possession of France.

The Duke of Savoy was, by this treaty, to marry the Princess Marguerite, my aunt, sister of the King of France, who was to bring to him as her marriage-portion his own kingdom, which had been in the possession of France since the time of Francis I.

Henry, moreover, was compelled, in the same way, to renounce all the advantages obtained by the victories of Marshal de Brissac in Northern Italy, and to give up into the hands of Philip no less than one hundred and eighty-nine fortified towns in that part of Italy alone.

Indeed Philip, as was to be expected, got the lion's share in every way, for, besides taking possession of the island of Corsica, which he afterwards gave up to the Genoese, and a great part of Germany, he entered into peaceful possession of the rich kingdom of Naples, which France was compelled to give up for ever.

The Duke de Guise, when the particulars of this treaty had been made known to him, left the army, and hastened to declare that such a treaty was a disgrace to France; and that what had been done was nothing less than treason. But it was too late, Henry, with one stroke of the pen, had given over to Spain what the Kaiser Karl himself, even after the victory of St Quentin, could never have hoped to obtain, and what it would have

taken Philip many years to have conquered with his arms, victorious as they always were. But the worst of all, and by far the most degrading and most unfortunate part of this treaty, was that by it I, the Princess Elisabeth of France, was to marry—not the Prince of the Asturias, as at first intended and as I myself expected—but Philip himself!

V.

“For marriage is a matter of more worth
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship ;
For what is wedlock forced but as hell,
An age of discord and continual strife ;
Whereas the contrary bringeth forth happiness,
And is a pattern of celestial bliss.”

SHAKSPEARE.

You may easily imagine my despair when this dreadful news was first made known to me. And yet it seemed so absurd to fret about a man I had never seen, that when the first burst of my indignation was over, I tried to appear as calm as possible, and to hide from those around me the disappointment I had experienced.

And yet all my people seemed to agree in believing that the father was a better match for me than the son.

“Don Carlos,” said Madame Coni, “is a delicate, sickly, ill-favoured boy, younger than you are ; who most likely will never live long enough to be king, while Philip is perhaps the handsomest monarch living, as he is decidedly the most powerful ; he is in the prime of manhood (he was then about 32), and I am sure when your highness sees him you will fall in love with him at once, as his late

consort the Queen of England did, and be as devoted a wife to him as she was."

I could not contradict this: according to all accounts Philip was indeed a very handsome, very religious, very amiable, and all-powerful king; while all agreed in describing Don Carlos to me, now that my marriage with him was completely given up, as a most delicate and fragile boy, small and ill-formed, whom every one pitied. In vain I pored over his miniature, which, since the arrival of Don Cesar had never left me, and tried to discover in the pale colourless face there portrayed, some marks of beauty; for there were none; however interesting that face, it possessed no trace of beauty. This I could not but perceive, and yet, in spite of all, I felt that if I did not then actually love that boy—for he was little more—I could have become his wife with pleasure, whereas the thought of marrying Philip made me shudder. My feelings for Don Carlos were unaccountable. Was it only the flattering descriptions I had heard of him from the lips of his friend, that had aroused in me the violent desire I felt to see, and love him? Or was it that we had been acquainted in the past in some way, and thus become dear to each other, as I sometimes imagined must have been the case; though at the time I condemned the very thought as a wild and impossible one?

These all-absorbing thoughts made me sad and

miserable. Amidst all these harassing emotions my mind was tossed about like a ship without a rudder to guide it, and I became pale and melancholy; until at last the state of my health alarmed my doctors, who ordered me immediate change of air and scene. I was consequently packed off, with my ladies and servants, to St Germain, where I was to remain until the time fixed for my marriage. I say *packed off*, because I took so little interest in what was going on around me, that I was literally carried to that country palace unawares. I remember being very much startled when, on arriving at St Germain late one afternoon, I was told I was to remain there for the present; my astonishment not being in any way lessened when I was assured that I had myself so desired it.

My father, in the meanwhile, had gone off to Chambord, on a visit to the Duchess de Valentinois, who wanted him now that the old Constable had quarrelled with her—for he sincerely believed that, at the last, after the surrender of Calais to the Duke de Guise, her sympathies had gone over to the side of the house of Lorraine; which was very likely the case, for Diane de Poitiers, who had found love enough for two successive kings in her tender, ever-youthful heart, was never very consistent in her likes and dislikes.

Some time afterwards the great Spanish General, Don Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, Duke of Alba,

who was to marry me in the name of his master, arrived in Paris ; and to gratify the vanity of this man, who only a few months before had been fighting against the French, devastating their fair country, destroying their towns, most unmercifully, and cruelly slaying their children, and who since then, had drawn up a treaty which covered the nation with dishonour, all manner of festivities and pageants were imagined ; amongst other things a royal hunt, which took place about the middle of June in the forests of Fontainebleau.

It was about this time that Don Cesar de Castro, whom I had not seen since my departure from Paris, arrived at St Germain—to kiss my hand for the last time before leaving for Spain, as he politely expressed it ; but as I readily guessed, with the more agreeable intention of seeing his fair Blanche, and having one last farewell interview with her.

“ Has the prince learnt the news of my approaching marriage to the king, his father ? ” I asked of him, “ and what does he say to it ? ”

“ Don Carlos,” he answered, trying in vain to conceal his agitation, “ is completely given over to despair ; I never could have imagined he would have taken this unfortunate affair so much to heart ; he says he will never see you, as he is sure to sink under the emotion which such a meeting would cause him, after what has happened ; and

would have sailed that very day for Flanders, where he has several friends and partizans, if his father, whom he dreads more than loves, had not been there at that moment."

This news was not fitted to give me back the calm serenity of mind I had come to St Germain to acquire, and which I so needed for the ceremony soon about to be performed. However, I managed to master my feelings enough to say that I would always esteem the Prince of Spain, and that I would try to be as good a mother to him as I might have been a wife.

I then left Don Cesar, who I knew would have much to say to his mother and his love before starting for Madrid—a long and tedious journey in those days—and I retired to my room, where I passed the rest of the day trying in vain to analyze my feelings for Don Carlos.

On the 18th the Court returned once more to the Louvre, and I followed the next day, as the contract of my marriage, as well as that of my aunt, the Princess Margaret, was to be signed on the 24th of June.

The ceremony of my marriage took place with all the splendour and luxury which were customary on such occasions ; it was solemnised in the Cathedral of Notre Dame, and the king, the two queens and all the Court assisted ; the Duke of Alba taking the place of Philip, who was at the time in the

low countries, and for whom it would not have been etiquette to come to Paris ; and thus I was married to a man I had never seen, and whom I knew to be the acknowledged enemy of my country, and of my family.

VI.

“ But now the hand of Fate is on the courtaine,
And gives the scene to light.”

DRYDEN.

To give greater splendour to my marriage and to that of my aunt, who, as I told you before, was, according to that fatal treaty of Chateau Cambresis, to marry the Duke of Savoy, the king gave orders that there should be three great tournaments in the lists of the royal palace of Tournelles. Henry, who had always been exceedingly fond of the tourney, in which he excelled by his natural courage and skill, determined to take part in them himself.

The 28th, which was the day appointed for the first tournament, Catherine de Medicis sent for the king early in the morning, and with tears in her eyes, entreated him not to appear in the lists as challenger, for his star, which she said she had consulted the previous night, aided by her wisest Italian astrologer, presented signs of danger, of mortal danger for him ! The king laughed aloud when he heard this, but Catherine, who was a great believer in magic, and who all through her life kept astrologers to consult the stars for her, night after

night, and never dared to undertake anything without having first consulted them, persisted in this declaration, adding, "The stars have never deceived me, sire."

"I would gladly obey your majesty's commands," he answered, "but I have given my royal word that I would fight, and I must appear in the lists."

So Catherine de Medicis was obliged to give up all hope of preventing her husband from fighting; and dressed in her finest robes, and adorned with her most expensive jewels, she attended the first tournament with all her ladies, as well as the rest of the Court. The king broke no end of lances, and maintained the field successfully against all comers, so all the honours of the joust fell to him; and at the end, when he approached the queen to receive from her hand the prize won by his courage and skill, he laughingly whispered in her ear—

"You see, Madam, that either your stars are sad liars, or those Italian astrologers of yours shamefully short-sighted!"

The queen could not repress a sigh as she listened to those irreverent words.

On the following day the queen and all the court met once more in the tiltyard of the old Palace of Tournelles, in the same order as on the previous day. At the end of the arena a superb cloth of estate had been erected, covered with velvet, figured with gold, and adorned with the arms of France and Castille,

the latter in my honour, for I was now indeed queen of Spain ; and there I sat with the queen ; who, as queen also of the tournament, was seated under a projecting canopy in the centre ; with the queen of Scotland, wife of the Dauphin, her young husband, his brothers and sisters, together with their respective lords and ladies in waiting, Diane de Poitiers, and her daughter, the Duchess d' Angoulême and the Duke of Alba with his numerous retinue.

First, there was some tilting, at which several Spanish as well as French cavaliers distinguished themselves, and then the great list began ; the King and the Dukes of Guise, Ferrara and Nemours, being the four champions.

These princes were known to be the bravest knights, not only in France, but in the whole of Europe, and, for the space of several hours, they fought so equally, that at the end of the day, the victory still remaining undecided ; the king, who was determined not to be outdone by anyone, would not give up, and insisted upon breaking another lance, although he had been the one to begin, and each knight had run an equal number of times. As not one of the other three champions would condescend to be conquered at the close of the day, after having fought so long and so bravely ; and, perhaps, also dreading the questionable triumph of conquering their king, Henry forced the Count de Montgomery,

the captain of his guards, to arm himself and run the last lance with him.

At this moment, a message was delivered to the king from his wife, requesting him to desist from his folly, and immediately to suspend the tournament.

“Tell Her Majesty that I will break this last lance in her honour,” was his answer, and he immediately turned towards his head groom, who was again placing the helmet on his head.

The queen, whose anxiety was now overpowering, as something seemed to tell her that that last time would be fatal to her husband, (she little knew *then* that the end of his reign would be the beginning of her own!), now sent the Duke of Savoy to entreat of him to give up. The emotion experienced by Catherine—an emotion which she could not conceal—had caused a great commotion in the royal stand, and Diane de Poitiers, fearing some treachery, also despatched a messenger to Henry, asking him, for *her sake*, to retire at once from the lists.

Perhaps the king would have desisted, now that he saw how alarmed the ladies were on his account, but feeling at the same time how very foolish this alarm was, considering the numerous runs he had successfully executed already that very day—runs which had not frightened anyone until then,—he would not give up the last; besides, he thought it would be unpardonable in

a knight to evince alarm in the presence of his lady-love ; so taking his place at the end of the arena, the same place from which he had started more than a hundred times in the last two days, he gallantly galloped forward on the right side of the dividing palisade, and met his opponent's lance in the very centre of it ; the lance of Montgommery, perhaps managed by a weaker or more unpractised hand, broke upon the breast-plate of the monarch, without, however, displacing Henry from his saddle, who was a very good rider and experienced in this sort of game.

A general shout of applause was heard on all sides, and Catherine de Medicis breathed freely once more, and pressed the golden crown, destined for the conqueror, against her beating heart ; though she knew very well that Henry would immediately present it to Diane de Poitiers, as was his custom on such occasions. But at that moment a general cry of horror pierced her ears ; the broken lance of Montgommery, which he had forgotten to throw away at the end of the palisade, as he should have done, but carried still in his hand while he galloped back towards the place he had occupied at the beginning, had, by one of those unaccountable accidents which sometimes happen, struck the king on the head, and removing part of the helmet, pierced through his eye to the very brain.

Henry fell heavily from his horse with one

wild cry of agony, a cry which struck horror to the hearts of all present, as they believed he had received his death-blow.

He was not dead, however, although mortally wounded; and it was with great difficulty he managed to utter a few incoherent sentences, asking those about him not to injure the captain of his guards, or to persecute him in any way for this unfortunate accident.

The worst fears of Catherine de Medicis were realised; the last tournament in June had indeed proved fatal to the king, as she assured us all, the stars had some time previously foretold would be the case.

VII.

“And here the first part
Of this drama is over. The curtain falls furl’d
On the actors within it—the Heart and the World.
Woody and wooer have play’d with the riddle of life—
Have they solved it?

Appear! answer Husband and Wife!”

OWEN MEREDITH.

It is useless to tell you that my poor father never recovered; he was conveyed by his gentlemen to his rooms in the Palace of Tournelles, which was nearer than the Louvre, and there we all repaired and remained the few days he still lingered upon the earth.

The day after this fatal accident the queen sent a messenger to the Duchess de Valentinois requesting her to give up the crown jewels which the king in a moment of weakness had given her.

“Is my master then dead, that Catherine de Medicis would command in France?” she asked with tears in her eyes.

“No,” answered the messenger, “his Majesty is still alive.”

“Then I will keep the jewels as long as he lives; should he die, I shall send them back immediately to her Majesty, for then I shall have

no more need of jewels of any kind, my happiness in this life will have come to an end when Henry dies—whilst hers will only then begin—pray tell her so.”

This was true; no sooner was Henry dead than Diane de Poitiers, who for two reigns had ruled supreme in the French court, for she had been the favourite of Francis I. before Henry was born, repaired—not to her beautiful palace at Anet, of which she generously made a present to Catherine de Medicis as a compensation for all she had made her suffer during her husband’s life—but to a little house in Chaumont-sur-Loire, as she now retired for ever from court, and gave herself completely over to grief; not daring, I suppose, to try the powers of her fascinations upon the new king, Francis II., fearing perhaps that the youth and fresher charms of Marie Stuart would make her too powerful a rival to be supplanted *easily* in the affections of her boyish husband.

On the 9th of July 1559 the marriage of the Princess Margaret to the Duke of Savoy was solemnised by the special orders of the king, who wished to see his beloved sister married before his death; and on the following day he died after eleven days of continual suffering.

My brother then ascended the throne, and with him the princes of the house of Lorraine, uncles of Marie Stuart, came into power; together with Catherine de Medicis, who, although the thirst for

power, which in later years so completely devoured her, had already been awakened, knowing that she could hardly be regent with a king who had been declared of age—though only sixteen, wisely contented herself with identifying her cause with that of the Duc de Guise, and advising her son to allow them both to govern for him; an arrangement to which both Francis and his young wife agreed with pleasure, for *she* had complete confidence in her uncles, and *he* loved his mother dearly.

So with the premature death of Henry, Catherine's reign began, and the woman who had been so patient and so humble during her husband's life, submitting without a murmur to all the humiliations to which his undisguised love for Diane de Poitiers exposed her every day, now became the powerful regent of France; the wise and proud queen who for the long space of three reigns ruled supreme in France and made her sovereign will to be respected and feared throughout Europe.

All this time my husband, Philip, whom I had not yet seen, had been in the low countries suppressing an insurrection which had burst out there, in consequence of the strong measures he had used to suppress the rapid advancement of the reformation; and several months were yet to elapse before I was destined to join him.

At last, when the mourning for our father had

come to an end, preparations were begun for my safe and honourable conduct to Spain. My mother, the queen dowager, together with the king, my brother, and almost the entire Court, accompanied me as far as Poitiers ; from which town the King of Navarre, the Cardinal de Bourbon, and the Prince de la Roche-sur-Tou were to escort me to the frontier.

Madame Coni, my governess, was to leave me here, returning with the rest to Paris, as she was to be governess to my sister Claude, who afterwards married the Duke de Lorraine. Doña Luz, my Spanish lady-in-waiting, also left me ; for although I should have preferred to have kept her near me, for some reason or other which she never told me, her dread of meeting Philip was so great that she could not be persuaded to enter Spain ; and, according to her own wishes, I left her in a convent at Bayonne, where she assured me she would spend the rest of her life praying for me, as she never could forget how kind I had been to her. Blanche, however, for whom going to Spain was almost the same thing as going to heaven, for she knew that there she would once more meet Don Cesar de Castro, accompanied me ; together with the Countess d' Aremberg, my new lady-in-waiting.

At the frontier I was met by the Duke del Infantado, the Cardinal Archbishop of Burgos, Don Francisco de Mendoza, and the Countess de

Urueña, who had been sent by the king to welcome me ; and to conduct me with all due honour, according to the established etiquette, to Guadalajara, where he himself was to receive me, accompanied by the princes of the imperial houses of Austria and Aragon, the grandees of Spain, and all the nobility of Castille.

Before leaving me, Madame Coni, that devoted friend of my youth, whom I was destined never to see again, gave me long and loving advice as to my future rules of conduct.

“You are entering life under the most brilliant auspices ;” I remember she said, amongst other things. “Ah ! let me hope, dear Princess, that the noonday will keep the promise of the dawn ! You are susceptible, imaginative, romantic—do not expect too much, or dream too fondly. When you are a queen do not imagine that a throne is exempt from trials and cares ; if you know yourself beloved, do not ask from the busy and anxious spirit of a king all which romance so often promises, and life but rarely yields. If Philip love you not, if your own noble heart rebel, if ever it be dissatisfied, remember that innocence is preferable to happiness. If you were an every-day woman, and were going to marry an ordinary man, I would tell you that the most unhappy home is happier far than all the excitement abroad ; but alas ! Queens have no home ! You will have a thousand suitors hereafter, believe that the asp

lurks under the flatterer's tongue, and resolve, come what may, to be contented with your lot—which most likely, I warn you, will be a difficult one, placed, as you will be, between a proud and all-powerful husband, and a plotting, ambitious mother. Be the angel of peace between France and Spain. Take example from the conduct of your wise mother, if you find that a favourite ever acquires influence over your husband greater than that exercised by yourself; do, like Catherine de Medicis, forgive and forget; and let your own virtue alone, conquering all temptations, triumphing over all trials, be the only arm which you will use against your enemies; and rest convinced, dear Princess, that your own virtue and innocence will make you triumph at last over all your enemies, and will render you the happiest queen in Europe, as you will no doubt be the greatest."

My first interview with my husband was anything but a success. I had been told to expect a gallant, handsome man, in the prime of life, full of energy and vigour; and I saw instead only a stern, stiff, severe, very gloomy looking man, anything but sympathetic to me, and who only inspired me with one feeling, that of fear. Whilst he, on his side, as I afterwards learnt much to my regret, having only seen the highly-flattered portraits of me, which my father had sent him, was greatly disappointed when he saw the reality; which I daresay must have been anything but pleasing to

him, after the ideal queen he had no doubt conceived in his imagination.

Besides, he looked at me with his piercing, cold, grey eyes, that seemed to search my very soul, and turn it into ice; he gazed so steadily and even fiercely, that I was obliged to raise my own eyes, whilst all the colour left my cheeks; but when my eyes met his, I was soon forced to lower them again, so repulsive appeared that persistent gaze of his, always fixed upon me. The king, greatly displeased by my awkwardness and surprised looks, asked me in a voice as cold as his eyes :

“Are you looking to see how many grey hairs I have?” *

His stern demeanour made me shiver. He was very gracious, however, in his own peculiar, cold way; and conducted me himself to the private apartments which had been prepared for me in the palace of the Duke del Infantado. There everything wore that air of cold melancholy grandeur, so characteristic of the Spain of the sixteenth century, so different from the elegant, luxurious Renaissance, which, since the reign of Francis I., had pervaded all things French, and to which I had been accustomed from my birth. In the old feudal town of Guadalajara, the Dutch and Moorish styles had been everywhere blended together, but so unhappily that the beauties of both

* Historic.

were spoilt, and every little detail altered and subdued into the severe, religious, and stern style of the age, an age of despotism and monks, in which the house of God and that of the king could alone pretend to anything like grandeur ; for the wise and rigidly carried-out policy of the Catholic Isabel, the great-grandmother of Philip II., was to put down the old feudal rights of the nobility, and thus diminish their power and vanity, rendering the king the sole master of everything ; and this policy had now, during several reigns, been carried out with such vigour, that anything like a taste for beauty seemed literally to have been drained out of the country.

On the 31st of January 1560, the celebration of my marriage took place in the chapel of the Ducal palace, the Cardinal Archbishop performing the ceremony ; it was only a repetition of what had already taken place in the cathedral at Paris, now several months ago, but a very painful one to me, for it was on this occasion that I first beheld the Prince of the Asturias, Don Carlos of Austria.

How can I describe him ? How can I now at this distance of time, separate him from my own sensations, and from all that has taken place between us since ? How can I see him again as he looked when my eyes first rested on him in that earthly life—the first in which we were destined to meet and love each other—and yet

precisely the one in which our union had become impossible.

He was not handsome, at least he was not considered so in general, but the thought never came into my mind whether he were handsome or not; sympathies that lay too deep to enable me to make a detailed analysis of his person, sympathies too deep almost for looks, were aroused in my mind at his sight, and crowded to my breast, completely overpowering the personal charm which my senses might have felt; and let this suffice you, for the mystery which underlies the beauty of men is never raised in a woman's eyes above the reach of all expression, until it has claimed kindred with the deeper mystery in her own soul.

I loved him directly I saw him, I loved him with all my heart, and I loved him as I knew I could love *him* alone, for I felt that he filled a void in my spiritual nature that had remained unknown to me till he appeared.

Our eyes were fixed on each other all through the long service, though the king stood close beside me dressed in all the attributes of royalty; to all other eyes eclipsing completely with his grandeur and magnificence the poor Don Carlos. Not one word passed between us, yet our souls understood each other; and when at the end of the religious ceremony he advanced to kiss my hand, which was the etiquette for him, as the heir

of the crown, to do the first, the cold fingers that trembled in mine, the soft blue eyes filled with tears, the pale cheeks with a bright red spot burning on each, the faint smile that in vain struggled to live on his full red lips and died away from them while I looked at it, told me too plainly with what difficulty his outward composure was maintained. I would have given worlds to have clasped him in my arms at that moment, but court etiquette forbade, and I knew that more than six hundred eyes were fixed upon me at that moment.

It was, indeed, a painful moment for us both.

As for Don Carlos, directly he saw me he knew, as he had already felt, from the faithful portrait I had sent him, and from the letters of his friend Don Cesar, that I was the only woman he could ever love; the woman he had thought and dreamt of as his wife.

God had intended us for each other.

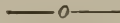
Destiny had made us husband and wife from our births.

The world had promised us to one another almost from the cradle.

Love had already joined our souls in heaven.

But horror of all horrors—Philip had turned me into his *mother*!

NIGHT THE FOURTEENTH.



“I hold it true with him who sings
To one dear harp in diverse tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones,
Of their dead selves, to higher things.”
A. TENNYSON.

I.

“ *La muy noble, leal, Imperial,
Coronada, y muy heroica villa
Y corte de Madrid.*”

A SERIOUS and monkish king occasioned a cheerless, cold, convent-like capital.

That royal kill-joy, named Philip, needed a court as serious as his thoughts—as large as his soul—as empty as his dreams.

God made the desert and the sea—the dreary barren plains of the great Sahara and the vast extent of the Ocean.

But even the desert and the ocean possess charms of their own.

It is sweet to see the evening stars glittering above our heads, as one after another, they pierce the vast blue sky which knows no limits.

It is pleasant to see the camels appear in the golden distance.

It is grand to watch the mighty sun’s red orb as it sinks beyond the horizon ; where the infinity of sand and the infinity of sky appear to touch and become one infinite infinity.

There is something to admire even in the pathless desert.

And there is an indescribable rapture felt on the lonely shore.

It is beautiful to contemplate the rainbow when, with its many colours, it spans the sky.

It is grand to behold the raging tempest, and to feel the power of Him who made the elements.

There is always music in the deep sea's roar ; and there is something sublime in its incessant motion, something grand in that restless unrest.

There is society where none can intrude—for surrounded by God's glorious creation, who is the ungrateful infidel who would feel lonely ?

But more dreary than this — far, far more dreary than ocean deep or desert wide was Madrid.

For Philip created Madrid, and when Philip chose he excelled in creating the extreme of ugliness.

London is the metropolis of England, Paris is the heart of France, through which all its life-blood must flow, from which all its actions must originate—Vienna is a great city, Rome is the historical capital of Italy, Berlin is the predestined centre of Prussia, Constantinople is the long contested key of Eastern Europe—

Madrid was not the metropolis of Spain—Madrid was not the heart of Philip's empire—Madrid was not a great city—Madrid was not the historical capital of Castille—Madrid was never the predestined centre of the Spanish monarchy—

Madrid had never been a contested city—Madrid was not a city—Madrid is not a city.

Madrid is but a town—and in the sixteenth century was an immense, shapeless, dreary, unhealthy town.

But Madrid was the realisation of one of the dreams of Philip.

Was it his brightest ?

Philip possessed half Europe, he had the choice of the fairest cities of the world—he preferred Madrid, it was more in harmony with his soul.

Fair Seville beckoned him towards the sunny south ; and offered him her countless charms, and the gold and riches of a new world beyond the sea.

Lisbon smiled as she reflected her many palaces upon the ocean's waves.

Naples, at the foot of Vesuvius, awaited him with her fair, blue bay.

The German cities of the north would fain have lodged him within their walls.

Vienna was ready to receive him.

Mexico, the capital of his vast transatlantic empire, displayed all its untold treasures to attract him towards the matchless palace of the Montezumas.

Milan and Turin, the centres of Piedmont and Lombardy, awaited his commands.

While in Spain, Salamanca offered him its boundless learning.

Toledo, its wealth of tradition.

Sweet Granada, its gorgeous palaces.

Cordova, its charming situation.

Burgos, its splendid buildings.

Malaga, its mild delicious climate.

Valladolid, all the glories of its past.

Rome itself, if he had so chosen, would gladly have welcomed him.

He despised them all.

He preferred the little unknown, dreary, cheerless town that rose on the bleakest side of the most barren plateau in Spain, on the banks of the poorest river in Europe.

And Madrid became the capital of Spain.

The capital of Europe for some years.

Madrid has increased in size—it has increased in beauty—it has increased even in gaiety since Philip is no longer there; indeed, it is actually a bright, lively, gay, and pretty town now-a-days. But it is not a city.

Great kings have created palaces within its walls.

Proud nobles have raised mansions, and planted gardens.

Philanthropic rulers have planned extensive public promenades and matchless museums.

Energetic speculators have built up any amount of houses, theatres, circuses

But no one has ever thought of building a cathedral.

The existing exchange seems sadly out of place in that light-hearted, frivolous, pleasure-alone-loving court.

Its surrounding walls of brick would draw a smile from the most serious and phlegmatic of German generals.

The bare, sun-burnt, half-frozen hills about it would give the spleen even to a light-hearted Frenchman.

Was Philip in his right senses when he chose this site for the capital from which he intended to rule the universe?

But I must not go on like this any longer, describing Madrid in such a negative fashion, though I fear it would be impossible to convey an idea of its chief characteristics otherwise; but I know you will think I am trying to imitate the style of Victor Hugo—or, perhaps, of Ollendorff! So you had better forget what I have said, and I'll now try to give you a truthful and accurate description of what Madrid was in the sixteenth century, when it fell to our common lot to be its unfortunate inhabitants.

II.

“ This is the voice of years that are gone !
They roll before me with all their deeds.”

OSSIAN.

THE greatness of Madrid was entirely thrust upon it, by Philip II. Originally, it was a small Moorish town, which, after the conquest, dwindled into a little Castillian village. The Catholic kings were the first of the Spanish monarchs who visited Madrid ; and their grandchild, Charles V., finding, in its thin piercing air, a cure for his attacks of gout, stopped occasionally in its old Moorish Alcazar when on his journeyings through Central Spain. Philip II. was, however, the first who actually lived in Madrid, and established the Spanish court there.

The kings of the Austrian dynasty, too much occupied with their great conquests and their foreign politics, to pay much attention to beautifying their new capital, had left it to grow as it pleased, and in what direction it pleased. Perhaps this was the reason why Madrid was the last town in Spain to shake off the characteristics of a feudal town of the middle ages, and why, in the sixteenth century, though comparatively, and to all intents and purposes, a new town, it

retained such a decided air of the baronial days when each noble was a little independent king.

The other night, when speaking of Guadalajara, I reminded you of that wise policy begun by the Catholic kings of weakening the power of the nobles, and gradually depriving them of their old feudal rights, which made them too powerful as subjects to suit a race of kings, who must needs reign despotically to reign at all; for the Spanish royal houses of Asturias, Leon, Castille, and Aragon had now come to an end, and the monarchs of the old country must henceforward come from foreign parts.

In the olden days when the grandees were the pillars of the State, the masters of the nation, each noble, whether in the country or in the town, ruled supreme over that part of the population living on his domain. In the country, strongholds and castles were needed for the proper maintenance of these prerogatives, castles which were so characteristic of the country, that it actually derived its name of Castille, from them; whilst in the towns, noble palaces, which might be fortified effectually in case of hostilities, either from the kings or people, rose on every side; palaces which, together with that portion of the town or city belonging to one lord, were actually surrounded by strong walls and watch-towers, which divided them from the neighbouring lands belonging to other noble families.

When the Emperor Charles came to rule over Spain, he wisely did away with all these preparations for internal warfare, and had the interior walls of his various towns pulled down. In Madrid, where the noble families were few, and these not very powerful, the walls and towers were allowed to stand, though a few were pulled down occasionally, as the requirements of the court needed more space to accommodate all the families who now flocked to the new capital.

The streets, which were narrow, tortuous, and ill paved—when paved at all—were at every turn blocked up by pieces of the old walls, and towers, and gates which seemed to have been left standing in the centre of squares and markets as remains of a civilisation fast fading into the shades of the past.

Another peculiarity of Madrid was its numerous churches and convents. During the reign of Philip, when Madrid, so to speak, was still in its infancy, it already possessed twelve parishes, thirty-six monasteries, and thirty-one convents; besides the great Abbey of St Martin, and the innumerable churches and chapels which grow like mushrooms in that rich soil so favourable to priests, monks, and nuns.

The old Alcazar, which had lately become an imperial castle, soon to be converted into a royal palace, occupied pretty much the same site which the modern residence of the Bourbons occupies

to-day, that grand palace, which undoubtedly is the finest in the whole world.

This castle built in the days in which art as well as everything else was undergoing a great transition, naturally partook of both the old and the new styles, with here and there ornaments in the old Roman, Arabic, Moorish, Gothic, Byzantine and Flemish taste; wild reminiscences of the different races who had successively ruled in the country. Its lofty pointed roofs and gable ends built up like steps beside them, gave it the outward air of a Dutch building; while its battlements and many towers reminded one of the national castellated style now so fast growing out of fashion.

This castle was immense and was surrounded by an extensive park, which on one side sloped down to the river, whilst on the other it looked towards the town; a park out of which have grown in the course of time the beautiful gardens del Moro, and that grand Plaza de Oriente, which all foreigners so admire; perhaps because it contains three of the wonders of Europe—the equestrian statue of Philip, the Teatro Real, and the façade of the palace itself. In the days of Philip II., however, there was nothing of this; in fact there was nothing whatever to admire, for the dirty streets of the old town with their half-Moorish, half-Dutch buildings devoid of all beauty

reached almost to the castle gates in this particular spot.

The inside was large and contained innumerable suites of apartments, connected together by long galleries and corridors ; some of the rooms being luxuriously, and at times even tastefully decorated ; whilst others through which one was obliged to pass before getting to the former, were scantily and poorly furnished.

In that town and in this palace was born, on the night of 8th of July 1545, the Infante of Spain, Don Carlos of Austria and Aragon, son of Don Felipe, Prince of the Asturias, and Archduke of Austria, and the Princess Maria, daughter of John III., King of Portugal and grandson of Charles V., King of Spain, Italy, Naples, the Netherlands, and Emperor of Germany.

From his very cradle this prince was unlucky ; his mother dying three days after his birth. He was always a delicate boy, and his weak constitution exposed him to all sorts of ailments, which in other children would have been without serious consequences, but which in him always developed into dangerous and lengthy illnesses, that often caused those around him great anxiety.

The poor prince was brought up without the tender care of a mother, surrounded by serious men, the greater part of them old priests to whom the care of his education had been entrusted by the emperor, his grandfather. During the first seven

years of his life, the Princess Juana, his aunt, who afterwards became the mother of the King Don Sebastian and the regent of Spain, looked after him—though still in an indirect sort of way, for their households were completely separate;—and when in 1552 she left him to be married to the crown-prince of Portugal, he accompanied her as far as Fordesillas, where the old Queen Jane (Juana la loca), the emperor's mother, was at the time living; their separation was a sad one, for the poor boy felt that this kind aunt was the only person of all those around, who cared the least for him. A few years later, when his father was going to leave Spain to marry the Queen of England, he named Onorato Juan his tutor, a warm-hearted man of great intelligence, and a great thinker, who almost entirely directed the Infante's young mind, and first developed in him that surprising spirit of freedom and love of truth which afterwards so distinguished him amongst the princes of the Austrian line. Don Carlos never forgot what he owed to this truly good man; and in after-years, when his love for theology had caused him to enter the church, he obtained for him the See of Osma; and later on used all his influence with the reigning pontiff, that he might present him with a cardinal's hat. Onorato Juan was, from the very first, Don Carlos' greatest, I may say his only, friend, until Don Cesar de Castro, his father's natural son, was, by the

express orders of Don Felipe, who had never yet openly acknowledged him as his son, brought to the royal palace, and enrolled into his household ; when he soon became the young prince's play-mate and inseparable companion.

Don Cesar, whose mother, Doña Luz de Castro, was the daughter of one of the oldest houses of Castille—this being most likely the reason why Philip had never openly acknowledged him to be his son—was a few years older than the Infante. It is the senior of from two to four years, as Lord Lytton says, that most seduces and enthrals us. He has the same pursuits, views, objects, pleasures, but more art and experience in them all. He goes with us in the path we feel drawn to tread, but which the older generation about us warn us to shun. This is true, there can be but little influence where there is not great sympathy, and we can never sympathise fully with persons much older than ourselves. Don Carlos until now had only known masters and servants ; he now met for the first time with a mind which, though not superior to his own, yet had power to control it. He had met cleverer people, but none so suited to his peculiar temperament as this half-brother, and so it is not to be wondered at that in the course of time they should have become such warm friends.

Another youthful companion, who was also destined soon afterwards to become his friend,

though never perhaps such a true one as Don Cesar, was Don Juan of Austria, the emperor's natural son. But from the first Don Carlos felt hurt and wounded by the presence of this boy-uncle, in whom, I suppose, he already detected the future conqueror of mankind; and he could not bear to hear his aunt, the Princess Juana, call him "Brother," and "Royal Highness," and see her treat him with the respect due alone, in his eyes, to a legitimate prince.

This was the state of things when the emperor, after having solemnly abdicated at Brussels, returned once more to Spain, where he intended to enter the monastery of Yuste. He was accompanied by his sister Eleanor, Queen of France (the widow of Francis I., my grandfather), and was received with all due honour at Valladolid by his daughter the Princess Juana, (now the widow of the Crown Prince of Portugal, who had died soon after his marriage,) who now ruled as regent in Spain; and by the Archduke Maximilian, who was to succeed him on the throne of the Cæsars with his wife, the Queen of Bohemia. This was the first time that Don Carlos saw his grandfather, and, according to all reports, the great emperor was much pleased with his little heir, and amused himself by recounting to him endless stories of his numerous campaigns, to which the prince listened in raptures. But this pleasant state of affairs was not destined to last

long, for at the end of fifteen days the Kaiser Karl left the Court at Valladolid, and shut himself up in the gloomy monastery which he was destined never to leave ; though at the time some said he would gladly have done so, had his son Philip, who now became King of Spain, allowed him.

And now I suppose I ought to say something about this great king to whom, in spite of all his faults, Spain owes her grandeur.

Philip was neither a tyrannical nor a vindictive man ; his faults arose from his overwhelming ambition ; and from his utter indifference to all men, whom in his grandeur he despised, as indeed he did everything that was not conducive to his own ends. He would not have injured a worm if it did him no harm, but he would have involved the whole of Europe in a desperate war if he had thought for a moment that any one had dared to criticise his conduct for sparing the worm. He was a man of mixed motives ; his mind was powerful, but ill at ease ; and his nature was one of those that feeds upon itself in solitude, bitterness, and suspicion ; he was obstinate, but never cruel ; brave, but never daring ; military success had no charms for him as it had for his father. If his great father can be compared to Julius Cæsar, he might in the same way, and taking into consideration the great difference of the age in which they lived, be in his turn com-

pared to Augustus, though perhaps he was never quite such a hypocrite and intriguer as Tacitus makes Augustus out to have been.

Philip had one of those cold, unimpassioned characters that live by rule, make a plan and act upon it, without allowing heart or imagination to interfere. And in this respect alone he might have resembled Augustus. Some said that he had no heart; they might have been right; men like these are not often troubled with such inconvenient superfluities—they have only a head, and this must be covered by a royal crown to be worth anything.

He was a devout man and a real Christian, yet no scruple ever troubled his head as to whether it was right to persecute the Holy Father or not. His orthodoxy was never doubted for a moment; he took care of that. And when the good Siliceo, Archbishop of Toledo, and Primate of Spain, who had been his tutor when a boy, reproached him one day for his want of faith, he proudly answered, “What matters to you whether I possess faith or not, Christianity possesses *me*; that should satisfy you.”

You can read the whole character of the man in that answer.

With such a father, whom no son could ever love, however a subject might admire, Don Carlos grew up uncared for and unloved, excepting by his friend Don Cesar; for the love which

his aunt Doña Juana had felt for him in his childhood had been very much weakened, during later years, by the great interest she took in the affairs of State.

As I have said before, Don Carlos was not handsome ; the large heavy jaw of the Austrian line was too much developed in him, and his full scarlet lips looked like those of a sensualist ; and, as unfortunately their restless play brought them continually into notice, they almost formed the most conspicuous feature in his countenance. His complexion, though exceedingly fair, bespoke a delicate constitution. But then, when one looked at his eyes, the painful impression caused by the rest of his face was completely forgotten, for in them one could read his entire soul. They were eyes lovely in colour and lovely in form, large, tender, and thoughtful ; but beautiful above all things in the clear truthfulness of their look—a look that seemed to come from their inmost depth, and shine through all the changes of expression with the light of a purer and better world. The charm which they shed over the whole face so covered and transformed the little natural blemishes peculiar to his race, that, after beholding those eyes, it was difficult to estimate the relative merits and defects of the other features. It would have seemed, indeed, that these had only been the general attributes peculiar to all the

members of his family, whilst the eyes alone were his own.

His character, like his face, participated greatly in this mixture of a general family likeness, and a strong individuality. He was not such a great man as his father, but he was decidedly a better man. His sentiments, though apparently not so lofty and god-like, were more human, and of a softer kind. The conscience of his father was a most elastic affair, to-day you could not stretch it over a mole-hill, to-morrow it hid a mountain of its own accord ; his was far more consistent. He did not pretend to be a bigot like his great ancestor, and yet I should not wonder if he were infinitely more religious.

His appreciation of Christ's beautiful doctrine was, without a doubt, higher than that of the rest of his family—devout Catholics though they pretended to be—and his actions showed plainly how greatly the maxims of mildness, justice, and pity, taught by the Fathers of the Church, had taken root in his young and highly impressionable heart ; for the sight of one of those frequent *autos-da-fê* in which his father, uncles and cousins, and even his tender-hearted aunt, assisted with such pleasure, always turned his blood cold, and disgusted him beyond measure.

Such was the Infante Don Carlos, when the idea first entered Philip's head of marrying him to me. No wonder, therefore, that he should have

forthwith sent his greatest friend to see the princess who was to become his wife, and inform him as to her appearance, character, and opinions. Don Cesar's report had been most favourable, and the Prince had fallen in love with me directly he saw my portrait ; for, I suppose something told him we were destined for each other, and no doubt his soul recognised in me that spirit who had so loved and watched over him during his last sojourn in the spirit-land, when, for some political motives, utterly foreign to our own intentions and wishes, the treaty of Chateau-Cambresis, that ended the war between our respective countries, made me his father's wife.

III.

“ God means every man to be happy, be sure,
He sends us no sorrows that have not some cure.
Our duty down here is to do, not to know.
Live as though life were earnest, and life will be so ;
Let each moment like Time’s last ambassador come ;
It will wait to deliver its message ; and some
Sort of answer it merits ; it is not the deed
A man does, but the way that he does it, should plead
For the man’s compensation in doing it.”

ROBERT LORD LYTTON.

THE harassing emotions which the sight of the only spirit I had really loved, for so long, and during so many changes, caused me to fall most dangerously ill, soon after that trying scene at Guadalajara. For some days the doctors could not make out the cause of this sudden illness, until the fourth day when they declared it to be the smallpox.

No sooner was the news spread over the town, than the king thought it safer, under the circumstances, for himself, his son, his sister, and the rest of the court, to quit Guadalajara at once. I was not sorry for this conduct, that must have struck everyone as being essentially selfish, particularly towards a young and beautiful bride ; for I was beautiful, at least so history records ; and they say history always tells the truth ! But I was only

too glad to get rid of the cold, severe eyes of that terrible king ; and Blanche and the other French ladies who had accompanied me, managed to nurse me through that dreadful illness, and made me as happy as they possibly could ; so I almost felt gratified for this *contretemps* which kept me, for a time at least, from the idle scandal-mongers of the Spanish court.

In the meantime an event took place which I shall not pass over without recording, for I may say it formed the culminating point of that particular life of yours, my beloved Walter.

Don Carlos being Philip's only son, and indeed the only son in the whole family, he had him declared at once his sole heir ; and for this imposing ceremony, which, according to the traditions of the old Spanish monarchy since the reign of Ataulfo, the first Gothic king, had always taken place in the Great Metropolitan Cathedral, the whole Court moved to Toledo, the old Castilian capital ; making this the excuse for so unkindly leaving me alone in Guadalajara.

Everything was done that could render this ceremony imposing and magnificent, and no expense was spared.

On the morning of the appointed day the royal cortège left the Alcazar preceded by the various masters of the ceremonies, the nobles followed, then the Prince of Parma, Alexander Farnese, the

great Admiral of Castille, and the Grandees of Spain, attired in their ermine mantles and covered with jewels, and even the very saddles of their horses adorned in like manner. The Infante followed, mounted on a spirited Arab steed of milky whiteness, and his dress, which was entirely made of cloth of silver, was so profusely covered with diamonds, that it was almost impossible to see his face, so dazzling were his garments; but if his face had been noticed, there was an expression in it more calculated to excite pity than envy, for he, the young and noble hero of the day, was at the time suffering from a malady which had already for some time caused the greatest anxiety to his doctors, and afterwards developed into a dangerous intermittent fever, which never left him till the end of his life.

But at that time all these sufferings were borne in secret, and to all beholders the young heir to the grandest crown in Christendom appeared the most enviable of mortals.

Beside him on one side rode his uncle, Don Juan of Austria, and, by his special request, his friend Don Cesar de Castro on the other—the two illegitimate sons of the family, who in later years were destined to shine so conspicuously in the pages of the history of Europe, while Don Carlos, the heir to all the honours of his proud race, is only mentioned in an indirect manner!

The ladies of the court followed in their luxu-

rious litters, attired in their finest robes, and displaying those priceless family jewels for which the Spanish nobility has at all times been so justly celebrated. The Infanta Juana, princess-dowager of Portugal, wore, however, a plain black velvet train, for she was still in mourning for her husband.

At last—preceded by four kings-at-arms and the mace-bearers, and followed by the Count de Oropeza, Earl Marshal of Castille, who carried the sword of state, and all the different members of his household, and an endless procession of officers, pages, generals, admirals, and ambassadors, —came the king himself, attired in yellow trunk-hose, embroidered with the lions and castles of Leon and Castille, and wearing a long black velvet mantle, embroidered with the Austrian eagle, and lined with ermine, which falling from his shoulders entirely covered his horse, and was sustained by his pages behind.

The Archbishop of Burgos, attired in his pontifical robes, and the Archbishops of Toledo, Seville, and Granada, together with the bishops of Avila and Pamplona, and all the cardinals, abbots, canons, and other high dignitaries of the church, received the prince at the cathedral door, and accompanied him to the high altar, near which a throne had been raised for the royal family.

The ceremony that followed was most imposing, the military music from the royal chapel alter-

nating with the solemn hymns of the cathedral choir. Towards the end of the ceremony there was suddenly a pause, and then one of the kings-at-arms said in a sonorous voice, which was heard all over the church, "Let all those who are to swear fidelity to his Imperial and Royal Highness, the Prince of the Asturias, Infante of Spain, and Archduke of Austria, take their places." The form of the oath was then read aloud, and the Infanta Juana, as the principal person present, rose, and accompanied by the king, her brother, knelt before the archbishop, and with her white hand upon the bible which he held, swore to obey her nephew, Don Carlos, in all things, and to consider him henceforth as the only heir to the throne. Then she rose, and walking towards the throne occupied by the prince, would have kissed his hand, but he graciously embraced her and kissed her on both cheeks.

Don Juan of Austria came next and went through the same ceremony as his sister; Don Carlos only allowing him to kiss his hand, after a resistance of some time.

The archbishops and cardinals followed, and then the Grandees of Spain, beginning with the oldest. When it came to the Duke of Alba's turn, he also went through the prescribed forms, and took the oath, but with marked displeasure, as was noticed by all; and when he passed the seat occupied by the prince, either in pride or forget-

fulness, he looked the other way, and did not kneel down, as the rest had done, to kiss his prince's hand.

Don Carlos was greatly hurt by the Duke's conduct, and instinctively his eyes sought those of the king. Philip understanding this mute appeal, called the rebellious noble to order; and the proud Duke was obliged to kneel, but the prince in his turn refused to give him his hand, and only consented to do so after the repeated entreaties of his father and the archbishop.

This little incident, which was soon forgotten by those present, caused a mutual dislike to spring up between the heir to the throne and his father's greatest general, that soon afterwards proved fatal to the poor prince. The proud Duke never forgot that scene in the cathedral of Toledo.

Several feasts and pageants of various kinds, which lasted for many days, followed this important event, and to give still greater splendour to it, the king decided that a great *auto-da-fé* should take place on Sunday, the 25th of February, and that several hundred men should be burnt in honour of God, in the presence of the whole Court.

The news was received with universal applause, for the ladies of that day were as fond of *autos-da-fé* as their ancestresses had been of gladiatorial combats, and their grand-daughters are of bull-fights; but Don Carlos particularly objected to

seeing the festivities of his coming of age tarnished by so much human bloodshed, so he begged for an interview with the king, and with all becoming humility implored him to postpone this unnecessary sacrifice. Philip was, as usual, cold and severe with his son.

It was the great misfortune of Don Carlos's life to have lived separated from his father. It is true that no sympathy could ever have existed between them, all their ideas being so different; yet I am so convinced that people who live together, grow in the course of time to appreciate and even to love each other, that I firmly believe even Philip would have grown to love his son. As a rule, for people to appreciate each other, they must either be utter strangers or intimate friends. We admire strangers from hearsay, and in our imagination picture them to ourselves greater than they really are, while a short acquaintance only enables us to discover the peculiar turn their selfishness takes; we discover easily enough their vices, but very seldom their virtues, which seldom come out conspicuously in every-day life.

For it is with feelings as with waters—

“The shallow murmur, but the deep are dumb.”

And I am firmly convinced that the most wicked and most depraved of men still possess in their inmost hearts some redeeming points; that if we only knew them we should often find our-

selves excusing and pitying those we now most despise and condemn.

Philip, as I have said, was not a bad man, and undoubtedly he was a great one, Don Carlos, though by no means a great man, was also, as times went, not a bad one. The principal difference between them was this—the father's great and only passion was ambition, the son's was love—Philip loved power and conquest, Carlos loved sincerity and affection. I will not pretend to say which was the better of the two. Philip undoubtedly made a better king than Don Carlos would ever have made; but he could not have been such an affectionate son, devoted husband, and loving father as his son would have been had events allowed his domestic affection to have been called forth.

Yet, as I have already remarked, the great misfortune was that these two princes were obliged to live apart, strangers to each other. The father and son seldom met, and when they did it was only in the presence of strangers, when the etiquette of the Court prescribed a few set phrases to be spoken on either side; three bows and a kiss to be performed by one, and a few empty compliments to be uttered by the other. With such ridiculous customs, how could two men ever get fond of each other.

I do not say for a moment that either of them was jealous of the other, yet the thought might

easily have suggested itself to those around them. I have already stated that the Infante was not ambitious, yet he was heir to a great throne, in those days, the first in Europe; and his thoughts at times must have run on the future. One cannot help wondering, whether the longing to be the first man in Christendom, instead of a mere powerless prince, ever affected the love of the son for the father; and whether his ambition, small as it was, ever overcame the natural desire that his father should live to rule his subjects as long as possible. Or, on the other side, the knowledge that this young man, so much younger and fairer, and perhaps more popular than himself, must one day mount the throne on which he then sat, and smile at his wise actions, and efface with one stroke of his pen what had taken him years to arrange and plan, ever aroused the father's jealousy. I do not know whether Don Carlos, sometimes in fancy, like Harry of Monmouth, may have put on the crown which was not yet his, and planned what he would do when he was king; but this I know, that had he lived to be king, his policy would have been a very different one from his father's—and perhaps it was better for Spain that he did not, however much humanity in general may have suffered in consequence.

On this particular occasion, Philip was as cold and as distant towards his son as he usually was towards every one; born to command, he could

not brook having his orders questioned even by his own and only son.

“ Oh sire, have pity !” said the Infante ; “ have pity, for my sake, and spare these poor wretches, who in their blindness refuse the comforts of our Mother Church !”

“ Pity ! Had Nero or Caligula, or any of the great Roman emperors, any pity for the Christians ? No, they had none ; I will not be less than they were ; it is now the Christians’ turn to burn the heretics !”

“ But think, oh great king, that perhaps you are destroying men who might in time repent and become good Catholics.”

“ That is the business of the Holy Office, not mine ; let them all die, and rest assured that the Lord will find out his own ! If they are good Catholics, as you say, they ought to thank me, for I give them the crown of martyrdom.”

The prince shuddered as he heard this, and could not help murmuring something about “ unchristian fanaticism,” which the king’s sharp ears caught.

“ Fanaticism !” he exclaimed, “ Fanaticism ! Well, yes ; if you will have it so, I am a fanatic ; and you will see, Prince, how I shall find in fanaticism the lever by which to move the world and rule it ; and if you take my advice, when you are king, do not forget the faithful friend that has served our family during so long a period.”

“I marvel, sire, at your majesty’s words, and wonder whether it be indeed the great Philip, to whom men look up as they would to a God, who can call fanaticism his friend. Virtue, in private as in public, shall be *my* only friend.”

Don Felipe smiled. “You are right as to private virtue, though remember, that it is only small men who must always be erect as darts, the great can afford to stoop at times ; but as to public virtue, Prince ! Virtue, I assure you, is a female ; as long as she is private property she is excellent ; but public virtue, like any other public lady, is a common prostitute, that now leans to one, now to another, according to the wind, and wise men consequently despise her.”

Don Carlos, quite astonished at his father’s unusual wit, stared at him in mute amazement.

“You admire me, Don Carlos ! Ah, perhaps you envy me now,” said the king, taking his son’s astonished looks for admiration.

“Genius, sire, was not made by God to be envied,” answered the prince. “We cannot envy the sun, but rather the fields that ripen beneath his rays.”

“Ah, you too—Prince of Asturias though you be—have learned the way to flatter the king ! And I who thought once that you were above the rest ! But men are all the same. Ah, would to the blessed Virgin I had done with them.”

Don Carlos was hurt by these words of his

father, in whom he now plainly saw how completely the all-consuming flame of ambition had destroyed all other affections. "You despise me too much, sire," he cried, "and you have too poor an idea of the rest of human kind ; when, even in the language of your own son, you can only discover a novel artifice of well-conceived flattery. It is true I am not the great general my grandfather was—nor yet the great and wise politician my father is—but what opportunities have I had to prove myself either? Yet I do not consider myself, though *only a man*, as your majesty says, and *not much above the rest*, as so utterly unworthy of the crown I some day shall be called upon to wear ; and I can honestly assure your majesty, that I shall do all in my power to render my subjects happy. I shall not pretend to be a god, too grand and mighty to sympathize with men, I shall be only a man myself, a man even as the humblest of my subjects ; but I shall teach them to love me like a father, not to fear me like a tyrant. I shall make myself and my people as one ; I being only the first in moments of danger ; the first in each attack against ignorance and superstition, the first to lead them in the triumphal onward march of civilisation and prosperity."

Carried away by his enthusiasm, the prince, forgetting himself, was actually talking to his king as he would to an equal ; but Philip seemed

not to notice this, but remained standing in the middle of the room as cold as a statue, and as impenetrable as the stone out of which it is cut. He did indeed look the god he wanted to be considered—only a god of marble; the Jupiter Capitolinus perhaps, which Caligula, Claudius, Augustus, and so many other emperors, whose heads, turned by success, had before him tried so hard to be taken for—but not the all-wise, all-good God of the universe, who is all pity, and justice, and love.

“You speak warmly!” he said at last, deigning to answer him, whilst a bitter smile of contempt played upon his lips.

“Because I feel keenly,” was the Infante’s quiet answer.

“Don Carlos, be not too certain as to the possession of that crown which I see you already count upon as yours; for our wise Father in heaven will not allow one who is unworthy to rule over his beloved Spain. It is I—the king—who tell you this. The *Auto-da-Fé* shall take place, and you shall be present and judge of my power, and see for yourself how I treat my enemies, and those of my God.”

After these menacing words, uttered in a freezing tone, Philip left the apartment; and Don Carlos, very much displeased with himself, his father, and even with his religion which sanctioned these cruel proceedings, was compelled to

witness the burning of the unfortunate Protestants and Jews ; and join with his aunt and the ladies of the Court in their laughter and merriment, which was repeatedly aroused by the unexpected mishaps which took place during the long and complicated performance, adding to the glee of the numerous spectators, and to the glory of God.

IV.

“Animum nunc hoc celorum, nunc dividit illuc.”

VIRGIL.

THE health of the Infante gave way at last. The sorrows that had preyed on his mind for so long, and the great disappointment he had sustained in his first and only attachment, after ruining his happiness, now destroyed his constitution.

The doctors, who always assign material causes to our sufferings, and accordingly try to cure them with material medicines, suggested change of air and scene. The climate of Madrid, where the Spanish court was then residing, was said to be too sharp and exhilarating for his delicate constitution, so Alcala de Henares, was, after due consideration, decided upon as his future residence. The situation was fine, not too distant from the capital, and yet far enough away to prevent the prince from joining in the amusements of the court ; besides, he could there take advantage of the proximity of the university, one of the finest in Europe in those days, to complete his education with a course of university studies.

Don Carlos, accompanied by Don Juan of Austria, the Prince Alexander Farnese, Don

Cesar, and several other noblemen, doctors, masters, and chaplains, together with the whole of his suite, left soon afterward for Alcala, and took up his residence in the archi-episcopal palace; placed at his disposal by the archbishop, as the mansion most fitted in the whole town for the accommodation of the Prince of Asturias.

I shall pass over in silence the everyday events which took place during his stay at the university; although I should mention that the fine healthy air of the place, and the quiet and studious life he led during the first months, greatly improved the general state of his health. Don Cesar was still his only friend, for both Don Juan of Austria and the Italian prince, who would gladly have been so, and who were faithfully attached to him, failed to inspire him with any confidence or sympathy. Besides, Don Cesar was the only confidant of his passion for me, and indeed, as he well knew, the only one who could understand him.

Don Cesar seeing that the Prince would not forget this hopeless love if he remained in Spain so near me, and perhaps fearing also for me, for he knew that I too loved Don Carlos, advised him repeatedly to quit Spain; and to achieve this, he tried, on several occasions, to inflame his enthusiasm by describing to him the sufferings and miseries to which the inhabitants of Flanders and the Netherlands were exposed; and the

cruelty of the Spanish governors and generals who ruled supreme over them ; and thus by arousing in him a love of freedom and a feeling of pity for these unfortunates, which he had before displayed on several occasions, induce him to proceed to the North and try to forget, in the excitement of a congenial occupation, the hopeless love that, by slow degrees, was gradually consuming his life.

“Speak not to me of power—Carlos can have no power while Philip sits on the throne above him,” was his sole answer.

“The power to do good is still left to you. Think of the thousands of men oppressed by the iron rule of a fanatic and tyrannical government, who look to you, their future king, as the only, the last hope left to them. Who so fit, as their future father, to console them under their present trials ? And to endeavour to render them the liberty of action and conscience for which they pine under the weight of the heavy yoke which the Duke of Alba and the Duchess of Parma have placed upon them.”

“And what would the Christian world say if I, the eldest son of Rome, were to help the progress of the reformation, as the Dutch call it ?”

“The world is a nettle, believe me, Carlos ; if you come in its way, however slightly, it will sting you ; but if you have the courage to grasp it with a bold hand, and hold it with a firm

grasp, it cannot sting you. For let a man once show the world that he feels afraid of its bark, and it will instantly fly at his heels. Let him fearlessly face it and it will leave him alone ; but if you fling it a bone, as you would to a dog, it will immediately lick your hand. Be not afraid of the world, it cannot harm the Prince Don Carlos, and the day will come when humanity will praise Charles VI. for what he did in his youth.

“ But Spain—consider the feelings of Catholic Spain ! ”

“ Spain will repent of her fanaticism fast enough, the day she loses the low countries in order to remain faithful to an idea, which, by that time, she will, no doubt, have outgrown, and then the whole blame will be thrown upon the king, who was weak enough to sacrifice the many, in consideration to the feelings of a few.”

“ But you forget that I am not the king.”

“ No, but you are his son.”

“ You are wrong, Cesar ; Philip is not my father, he is my king ; he does not love me, he cannot love me, for he knows that at his death I shall be king. All our interests are opposed, there can be nothing in common between us—nothing. You remember how, one day, to facilitate some new project of his, he betrothed me to Elisabeth de Valois, and you no doubt, also remember, how some time afterwards this same father sent for me, on his return from Germany, after not having

seen me for years. I entered his apartment much agitated, and with a quick step, ready to throw myself into his arms—into the loving arms of a father ; but a stately lord at the door ordered me to bow three times before the king, and then to kiss his hand. It was the king who had sent for me, not the father. And the king sat there in all his solemn state, cold and severe as usual. I kissed his hand, and my blood froze in my veins ; that hand was icy cold ! The king drew me towards him, not as a father clasps a son to his heart. Oh no ! He drew me with his icy hands until my ear touched his cold lips ; then he whispered in a low tone, so low that it would seem he dreaded that the figures embroidered on the tapestry should hear what he was about to say, ‘Prince Don Carlos, I commanded you, some time since, to love a certain princess.’ ‘Yes, sire,’ I answered, ‘and I have obeyed you. I love her with all my heart, with all my soul.’ ‘Very well,’ he continued, in the same cold whisper. ‘I see you are a dutiful subject. I now command you to forget that princess.’ He looked straight into my eyes ; I was too much surprised, astonished, confused, to answer. I remained like a statue, perfectly aghast with astonishment ; he waved his hand in silence, and bowing once more three times before him, with distant respect, I left the apartment ; but I left it cursing my fate. Then another day I was

requested to don my best garments to proceed to a chapel, and to be one of the witnesses to my father's marriage with Elisabeth de Valois, the woman I loved better than life—the woman for whom I would have given my crown—the woman who, perhaps, also loved me! Oh yes, she loved me; in vain I try to forget it, for the idea of her sufferings makes me miserable; but no—that look of hers, that smile on her heavenly face, that tremour of her lip; ah Cesar! she loved me—she loved me in spite of the most vile of all international bargainings accomplished at Chateau Cambresis; perhaps she too had been first ordered by her father to love me, and then to forget me! Oh, kings cannot be fathers! Kings can have no hearts, and the unfortunate sons of kings can only learn to obey their fathers; but to love them . . . ah never! . . . never!”

“Ah Carlos, how sorry I am for you!”

“And yet, I feel as if I *had* loved him—loved Philip! But when? how? No, it cannot be, and yet!”

“I too,” answered Don Cesar, “I too feel as if I had loved the king,—you know that some people say I am his son. . . .”

“Yes, Cesar, and let me believe it; say nothing that may shake my faith in this, for it is my only consolation. Yes, Cesar, you alone love me, you alone in this immense kingdom are my friend, and I feel as a brother for you; I love you, Cesar, I love

you as I could alone love a brother—as would to God I could love Elisabeth—but my passion for her is stronger than my reason.”

And the poor prince whose soft eyes were suffused with tears, fell upon his friend’s neck.

“Those tears will relieve you, Carlos,” Cesar said, as soon as he could sufficiently master his emotion to speak. “Would to heaven I could make you forget this unfortunate passion for the queen! Believe me, Carlos—friend, brother! Friendship is the wine of existence that gives new life to our hearts, that refreshes our sentiments, that makes us stronger and braver—but love is the fatal dram-drinking, that intoxicates, and can never satisfy; and I now feel certain that the world would go on smoother, and be much happier and better without it.”

“You are perhaps right, Cesar; would to the Blessed Virgin I could forget this mad passion of mine. What would I not give to be the same light-hearted, happy boy I was before; but you will ever be my friend, I feel I can depend upon you until the day I am king!”

“Ah speak not of that time, Carlos; the first day of thy reign will be the last of our friendship. Kings, you say yourself, can have no friends. Once Don Felipe dead, can I expect the greatest king in Europe, the demi-god Charles VI., to remember the poor friend of his unhappy youth? No, Carlos, I do not expect it, and believe me, I pity

you more than I pity myself. Do you understand what it is to wear a crown, a crown which is but a crown of thorns however golden it may appear ?”

“ I do, Cesar, yet for the sake of my Spaniards—were they all like thee—I would gladly bear its weight, and think myself happy.—But alas ! you are the only one who can appreciate me. Do my words sound egotistical ? I care not. I do not pretend to be better than the rest, I do not even pretend to be different ; but whether I am good or bad, a genius or a nonentity, you alone can understand me, Cesar, and therefore I say that you alone can appreciate me.”

“ You are right. A king is but a man, chosen from the rest, by God, to bear the public burden of a nation’s government ; but that government is so intoxicating, that kings seldom remember that in reality they are the servants, not the masters of the people ; and tyrannise instead of ruling, and destroy where they should build. I love you, Carlos, as perhaps no other man does in the whole of Spain ; and yet I shall be sorry to see you a king, the temptations are too great, the trials too strong ; Spain might gain, but your spirit would suffer.”

“ I love your language, Cesar, because it is not the language of flattery, which I hear from all the rest ; and I assure you that one look of approval from you would make me happier than the thanks of the whole nation.”

If I had time, dear Walter, I would give you several of these conversations, that show so plainly how both your beloved spirits had been improved by their last earthly trials ; but the history of our past lives will be long enough without going into any such details. I tell you of the changes that had taken place in our souls, but I must needs refrain from recounting to you the infinitesimal steps by which these changes were accomplished. I will therefore suppress all these conversations, however interesting they may be ; only occasionally telling you their substance ; and will try and finish this narrative as soon as possible.

After a few conversations, the pith of which was more or less the same as the foregoing one, and all of which were well calculated to move the paralysed soul of the Spanish prince to action ; Don Carlos consented to leave Spain for Flanders, to try and reconcile the rebellious Dutchmen to their old faith and their rightful sovereign. Don Cesar proposed to leave Alcala that very night to obtain the necessary permission from the king. After an affectionate farewell the friends separated at the door of the archi-episcopal palace. Don Cesar mounting his horse and riding on towards the Capital—and Don Carlos retiring to his bed soon afterwards—for he was far too much moved to join in the ordinary pastimes of the evening.

The Infante was soon asleep dreaming of the glory he would obtain in Flanders and of the

power that it would bring him ; of beautiful palaces and devoted ministers, of thankful subjects and loving friends—well, no reality can equal its dream. Sleep on, fair Don Carlos ! You would be restless enough if you were in possession of that of which you dream so fondly.

V.

“Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.”

SHAKESPEARE.

THE king received Don Cesar kindly, and listened with interest to his plans for the Prince's future career, but he laughed aloud when he heard that his idea was that Don Carlos should proceed to the Netherlands to quell the discontent amongst the rash-thinking Dutch.

“Cesar, you are mad!” he said with rising anger, yet with a certain mixture of kindness, for he loved this bastard son, perhaps even more than his rightful heir; and the thought that he owed him some atonement, may also perchance have influenced all his dealings with him. “You are mad;” he repeated. “I have always thought you to be a clear-headed youth, who at least knew his own mind, which is more than I can say for the Prince; but now I see you are almost as weak-minded and rash as he is.”

“Sire, allow me to say that you mistake the Prince's nature sadly, when your Majesty calls him weak-minded, and accuses him of not knowing his own mind. I know Don Carlos well, and can assure your Majesty that courage, perseverance,

and strength are not wanting in him, the only blank in his life is the want of a purpose ; but not the power to act, as one who does not know him sufficiently might suppose. Sire, he loves your Majesty too much to dare to form a line of conduct for himself ; and yet he fears to displease his royal father by asking him for advice ; the duties of a king are so great and so numerous, that he shrinks from taking your royal attention from the business of the state.

The king was moved—for he was not worse than his neighbours, though he did try so hard to make them believe he was much better—and in spite of being a king, he was still a father. Don Cesar saw the effect his words had produced upon Philip's better nature, and immediately tried to gain another point before that passing gleam of kind feeling had been dissipated by the all-consuming ambition and pride which he knew had complete mastery over the king's heart.

“The Dutch are everywhere in open revolt, and the strongest measures employed by the Duke of Alba to put them down seem to have no effect. The Prince of Orange is said to be at the head of the movement, and two of your Majesty's greatest generals, the Counts d'Egmont and Horn, whose services at St Quentin cannot yet have escaped your royal memory, are amongst the discontents. No amount of suffering, and no persecution, however severe, will quiet them ; indeed, harsh

measures will only increase their discontent. The strongest army from Spain, led by the greatest general of the age, will fail to convince them of the truths of our faith, and {of your Majesty's divine right of power over them; but if their future king were to present himself amongst them, not as conqueror at the head of a destroying army, but as a friend and protector, ready to restore peace and prosperity throughout the land, and ready to grant them their old liberties and ancient rights, which they so fondly cherish, I feel convinced that their discontent would immediately cease, and that those rich provinces of northern Germany would once more send you their brave stout soldiers, that so bravely fought for Spain during the late wars with France. Remember, Sire, that it was the little attention paid by Rome to the increasing power of the Germans that brought about the fall of that great empire. For the courageous and highly cultivated minds of that noble people are capable of the greatest enterprise, and their obstinacy and perseverance are great. A few concessions now, will restore peace, and will put an end to all future revolutions. In a few years the whole of the Netherlands will be in open revolt, Germany and England will perhaps help them; and then those fair provinces will be lost to Spain for ever. Now, they only ask for individual freedom; then,

they will insist upon the freedom of the country itself."

Philip remained silent for a few minutes. "Freedom," he muttered, between his tightly-set teeth—"Freedom! They only ask for freedom! Fools! And yet there was a time, when, in happy ignorance of mankind and of the world, I too dreamt of freedom. I remember once saying to my august father, the great Emperor, who now rests in peace, that I would like to be the free king of a free nation, and rule my subjects as a father rules his children, or not be king at all; but he laughed at me—'Freedom, Prince!' I remember he said, 'freedom, and pray, who is free—the people? not while they have a king to obey; the king? not while he has a people to please. No man will ever be free, believe me, as long as there lives another man on the same earth.' Ah, Cesar, what is free? not the vexed straw on the wind; not the frothed spray on the sea—the wild birds of the air; the lords of the virgin forests; the kings of the desert themselves, are not free. The great ocean itself as it rolls and swells, must roll and swell for ever in the bonds of a boundless obedience. Yes, Cesar, believe me, obedience is far nobler than freedom. God himself gives us the example in his heavenly kingdom, where everything is governed by rules and laws which all must obey."

"But surely your Majesty could not wish to

rule over their consciences, if, being their king, you must indeed rule over their actions ; a man's body may be his king's, a man's faith is his own."

The spirit of the bigot was now roused, and in a loud piercing voice he exclaimed, "What do I hear? Would *you* have *me*, Philip of Austria, the Catholic monarch of Spain, help the enemies of my God? No, it cannot be you, Cesar of Austria, who can thus speak—for you are my son ; though your mother will not permit me to acknowledge you as such before the world—know, and learn, that I, thy father and thy king, will pursue with fire and with sword, any one who dares to propose to me that I should spare the heretics, who deny the supreme power of God in heaven above, or in the earth beneath--no earthly consideration will induce me to do so. If all my subjects were to revolt against God, and join that accursed reformation, that has turned the heads of my poor blind subjects of the north, I would immediately abdicate ; for I would rather not reign at all, than reign over heretics."

Philip spoke with so much energy and earnestness, that even Cesar's mind, liberal and free-thinking as it was, wavered when he heard this, which half made him alter his opinions ; but the principles of liberty were too deeply rooted in his noble heart, and when he could master his voice to answer, he did so by pointing out to the king

that both France and England were doing all in their power to conciliate the Protestants, and that in those countries they had ceased to persecute them.

“And would you compare for a moment two such insignificant nations as France and England to Spain, the greatest nation on the face of the whole earth? Would you draw a comparison between the beggarly throne of England, that can hardly be said to rule over half a miserable little island, and the throne of Spain, the nearest in power to that of God; a throne that rules supreme over two worlds. France and England!—two nations that allow themselves to be governed by the vain caprices of a couple of women, the one the daughter of an Italian chemist, the other, the child of an adulterer and a courtesan!”

“Your Majesty may despise Catherine de Medicis and Elizabeth Tudor, and the nations they govern;” answered Don Cesar, with the rashness of youth, “but, believe me, the day will come when France and England will be great and powerful, rich and prosperous; while Spain, impoverished and demoralised by the bigotry of her kings, depopulated by the thousand victims burned on the altars of her faith, and by the emigration of countless numbers who will fly to America, and to other countries, with their families and their fortunes, to escape those blazing furnaces; weakened by incessant religious wars and revolu-

tions, harassed by Rome, with one half of her children in convents and monasteries, and the other half ruined and disheartened ; will be a sad object of pity to the rest of Europe ; the shapeless ruin of what was once the greatest and proudest, but at the same time, I must add, the most miserable and most bigoted nation on the face of the earth."

Had anyone else spoken thus in Spain at that time, he would have been at once handed over to the Holy Office of the Inquisition, to account for his irreverent and sacrreligious words ; it would indeed have been the duty of any Catholic to have immediately informed the Church of what had been said, for such sentiments were open treason to the Pope and to the king ; but fortunately, it was Don Cesar, the favourite of the king, who had dared to utter them ; and it was Philip, the only man in the whole of Spain beyond the reach of the Holy Office, who alone had heard them ; and as Philip loved Cesar, what in any other he would have punished with instant death, he only punished in him by a severe reprimand ; after which he forgave him, making him promise that he would that very evening confess to a priest, and obtain the necessary absolution. " I can forgive what you have said against me, foolish and rash Don Cesar, though it may take me a long time to forget it ; but God alone can forgive your blasphemy

against the Holy Church, and her wise and holy ministers."

Don Cesar, regretting very much that in the heat of the moment he had so far forgotten his usual caution, as to have spoken so openly, and with such bitterness to the king, left the next day for Alcala ; but he left without having gained the necessary permission from the king for the voyage of Don Carlos to the Netherlands. Arrived at the Archi-episcopal palace, he was told that His Royal Highness had gone to pray at the Franciscan monastery ; so, without dismounting, he proceeded to this monastery, which was at no great distance.

Don Carlos, hearing of the arrival of his friend, hurried out of the chapel in which he had most likely been praying for the success of this very commission ; and rapidly descended the steep staircase which led to the principal cloisters, where he met his friend, and impatiently demanded the king's answer ; when he learnt that nothing had been done, and that Philip had only laughed at the idea of his going to Flanders. The disappointment was very great, and, starting back, he missed his footing on the narrow step on which he was standing, and fell, rolling down to the bottom, a distance of only five steps ; but the shock caused him to faint, and was the beginning of that long and dangerous illness which nearly carried him to the grave ; and which nearly drove his poor father wild. Three times did Philip go

to Alcala, each time with less hope of finding his son alive, and it was only then, that that proud ambitious king discovered how much he loved his son.

At last, after three months of almost continual suffering, Don Carlos began gradually to recover ; and Spain once more breathed freely.

During the whole period of this long illness, which lasted ninety-three days, Don Carlos displayed much fortitude and patience, and also showed sentiments of the deepest piety ; he confessed frequently ; and more than once, when the doctors had completely despaired of his recovery, he received the last sacrament with all the devotion peculiar to his race. He was greatly gratified by his father's anxiety, and to spare his feelings always tried to hide his sufferings when the king was present.

When sufficiently recovered to quit Alcala de Henares, Don Carlos, accompanied by the king and the whole of his household, left for Madrid, never to return to the University. The greatest rejoicings followed, feasts and banquets were given by the king and by the nobility, to celebrate his recovery—which not a few in that superstitious court believed to have been purely miraculous—and every one was overjoyed to witness the love and good understanding which now seemed to exist between the king and his only son and heir ; indeed nothing appeared at the time to foretell the dreadful events that followed—joy and happiness

were in every heart ; the father and the son were everywhere to be seen, side by side, and yet—not very long after this an event occurred which was destined to change the whole policy of Europe, and which shook the Spanish monarchy to its very foundation—Don Carlos, the king's only son, the heir to the throne nearest to God's, as Philip denominated it, was shut up in a prison, accused of heresy and rebellion—rebellion against his own father !

But I must not anticipate.

VI.

“ Oh Love! what is it in this world of ours
Which makes it fatal to be loved? and why
With cypress branches hast thou wreathed thy bowers,
And made thy best interpreter a sigh?
As those who dote on odours pluck the flowers,
And place them on their breast—but place to die—
Thus, the frail beings we would fondly cherish
Are laid within our bosoms but to perish.”

LORD BYRON.

IN the days of which I am speaking (these events happened about the end of the year of our Lord 1562), the great convent-palace of the Escorial, that building which is so characteristic of the severe taste of the age, and the grandest ideal of majesty and solemn state which the world has ever seen, had not yet been built; though the plans for that mighty gridiron, with its countless courts which were in imitation of the interstices of the bars of that culinary implement, and its many towers destined to represent its legs, with its severe façade, immense church, and its eleven thousand windows, were already well developed in Philip's imagination. He had fixed his capital in Madrid, simply because it was the dreariest town in the whole of his dominions; and to envelop himself in still deeper desolation, he now wanted to build a living

mausoleum for himself and his descendants, on the top of a bleak, bare hill, swept by the glacial gales of the Guadarrama; parched by the vertical suns of summer, and exposed to the freezing colds of winter; in the midst of a scene which he prided himself no living man would ever have chosen for his residence.

But fortunately it was never my fate to inhabit that depressing, dreary palace; that honour fell to the lot of the Princess Anne of Bohemia, Philip's fourth wife; and it was in the beautiful palace of Aranjuez, and amidst its lovely gardens, that I generally spent the summer months; happy enough to be away from Madrid and its dull, damp, cheerless, palace.

It was in these charming gardens that Don Carlos first openly declared his love; until then we had met but seldom; first on account of my long illness; afterwards on account of his residence at Alcala, and the dangerous accident which kept him a prisoner to his bed for such a length of time; and lately on account of the journeys he had made with his father, through some of the provinces. So I may almost say that it was at Aranjuez that we first knew each other.

It was the early part of the spring of 1563; the gardens looked lovely, for every day their trees and flowers caught a new smile from the youthful season. I was quietly happy, living almost entirely out of doors as I did, surrounded by my

favourite ladies, (some of whom had become very dear to me, especially Blanche, my French maid-of-honour,) and seeing my severe and stern husband but at rare intervals, for he considered Aranjuez too lively a place for him.

But independently of this, Aranjuez was very dear to me in those early days of that never-to-be-forgotten spring. There was something then that seemed to carry me back to the days of my happy childhood at St Germain, when, as yet ignorant of the final course events would take, I believed myself the betrothed wife of Don Carlos. Here, as at St Germain, everything looked so fresh, so young, so lovely, the very air seemed to breathe of love ; the smallest trifles were enough to inform my still virgin heart with this great mystery of nature, in which all things around me seemed to rejoice ; for I too was in the spring-time of life, and the warm breath of that early season crept over my senses in spite of myself. Everywhere I saw the moist mellow earth beginning to put forth the green sprout and the tender blade ; and the trees and shrubs, in their reviving tints and bursting buds, giving promise of the returning foliage and flowers. The bleating of the new-dropped lambs was faintly heard from the fields beyond ; the sparrows twittered about with their companions in the thatched caves and budding hedges ; the robin sang a livelier note now that he had met his love, and the larks springing up in couples from the

dewy meadows, soared away into the bright fleecy clouds, pouring forth torrents of melody—Love, love, everything spoke of love—and my heart was full of it, and yet I had courage and resolution enough to refrain from disclosing the very passion which had now obtained such a complete mastery over my whole being. I saw the man I loved at my feet, begging with his whole warm noble heart for a smile, for a look—and I repressed that smile—I refused that look, which would have made me the happiest of beings to have been able to grant. Carlos, the only man I had ever loved, the *one* man that I knew heaven had destined for my eternal companion, knelt before me, and in the warmest, most irresistible manner declared his love; and I—though it nearly broke my heart—I refused that love. I rejected his suit, for in the eyes of the cold, unindulgent world, I was his mother!

You may well imagine, my beloved Walter, what I felt, what I suffered, before I was able to accomplish this dreadful sacrifice. I was broken-hearted and half-mad with despair, but I knew that I had done my duty. Schiller, in his beautiful drama of *Don Carlos*, accuses me of encouraging that Prince's suit, of actually confessing my love to him! I need not tell you that this is quite untrue; purely imaginary, for my resolution never faltered for one moment. I had made up my mind from the very first to forget *Don Carlos*, and the whole

of my existence was employed in endeavouring to forget him; but his love was too powerful for me. I loved him till the last; and yet never for one moment did I do, or say, anything which could have led anyone to suppose I was in love with him.

In the midst of this trial a new misfortune fell upon me. For some reason or other, unknown to me at the time, the king had expressed a wish that Blanche, my favourite lady, should make a great marriage, and he had actually betrothed her to the Duke de Feria, one of the proudest *grandees* of Spain; but this, without so much as consulting her wishes, or asking her opinion on the subject. Why such a mighty king as Philip II. should have troubled himself about the private affairs of a foreign maid-of-honour, or how it was that the Duke de Feria, one of the proudest *Hidalgos* in the whole kingdom, should have thought for a moment of marrying an unknown, poor, and not extraordinarily pretty, foreign girl, whose origin no one knew, were mysteries which quite overpowered both her imagination and mine. But the mere idea of becoming the wife of such a cold and solemn nobleman, who was old enough to be her grandfather, and serious enough to become her confessor, made the poor girl so miserable that I determined to do all in my power to prevent this marriage, and arrange instead a union between her and Don Cesar de Castro, whom I knew she had loved since their first meeting in Paris.

“I will never allow you, my beloved Blanche,” I said to her one day while still at Aranjuez, “to be sacrificed as I have been, and forced to marry a man you dislike, while you are all the time in love with another. I have thought of it very seriously, and the first time I see His Majesty, I will speak to him. I will say nothing to make him angry with you, nothing that you or I need be ashamed of; I will simply inform him that you love Don Cesar de Castro, and that you will only be happy as his wife. I know he likes him very much himself, and I feel certain that he will readily agree to our plans. As for the Duke, he has not seen enough of you even to know the colour of your eyes, so I daresay he will forget you ere long, and marry some proud Spanish lady, who will bring him half-a-dozen more quarterings, and a good, solid dowry.”

We were thus situated, when an unlooked-for event happened, which changed the whole course of our lives.

We had but lately left Aranjuez, and had only just returned to Madrid, when one day Don Cesar appeared in my apartments, and begged me to grant an interview to Don Carlos, who had to speak to me on the most serious matters. I was much perplexed as to what plan I should pursue, I feared to offend the prince, and yet I dreaded the anger of the king, who could not possibly approve of this secret meeting; particularly when I learnt that

Don Carlos had been for some time in private correspondence with the rebellious Dutch, and that the Count d' Egmont had actually offered him the crown of the Netherlands if he would go and join the revolutionists. These news bewildered me. Could it be the faithful Don Cesar, the favourite of Philip, who spoke thus? and could it actually be true that the Prince of the Asturias, the heir of the Spanish throne, was going to revolt against his own father, and usurp one of his crowns during his life? Impossible! No, it could not be. But yet, I must see the Infante himself, and, if this plan be actually in his head, try and prevent him from committing the two most serious crimes that a son and a subject could be guilty of.

Blanche was quite of my opinion, she too thought that it was my duty, as fate had fortunately disclosed to me the secret projects of this unhappy son against his father's government, to do all in my power to stop him from going on any further. My heart, too, led me to save him from the ruin and dishonour which I knew would fall upon him, even if his wild plans were ever to succeed. Yet my granting him an interview, after what he had confessed to me at Aranjuez, seemed such a serious step to take in my present position, that I still hesitated for a couple of days.

On the second day, however, Don Cesar again made his appearance at the palace. "The Prince is to leave Madrid to-morrow night for a sea-port,

where a vessel has been engaged to convey him, and those of his suite who are in the secret, to Flanders ; all the necessary precautions are taken, the king is hunting at the Pardo, and will not know anything until he hears, on his return to the capital, that his son has left ; and even then he will be told that Don Carlos is at Osma on a visit to his former tutor, the good old bishop Onorato Juan ; so that the Prince will have arrived at his destination, and will most probably be crowned king before the Spanish troops, at present scattered throughout the Netherlands, have heard anything about it. But Don Carlos would like to see your Majesty before he goes, and assure her once more of his good feelings towards her, and of the affectionate regard, happen what may, he will always entertain for Elisabeth de Valois."

After this I could entertain no more scruples ; I must see him and endeavour to prevent his leaving Spain. This was what my duty as his father's wife, and my own private feelings, prompted me to do without loss of time, for every second was now of the utmost importance.

The king, as Don Cesar had said, was at the time hunting in the Pardo, at some distance from Madrid ; but as I dreaded the scandal of the Court, and as any meeting between us could not take place in the Palace without its being noticed and discussed by all, I determined that we should meet in the old manor-house situated on the other

side of the river, and which is known to this day as the Casa de Campo. The Prince was to proceed there, accompanied only by Don Cesar, and was to wait in one of the halls of the old house, which was uninhabited, and which was almost as little used in those days as it is now ; whilst I, on my side, was to leave the royal palace by the secret passage (which to this day leads from one royal palace to the other, under the waters of the Manzanares, and which was then unknown to most people about the Court) ; and escorted by Blanche and a couple of trustworthy pages, who were to carry the necessary torches, join him in the deserted halls of the Casa de Campo, where no one would ever dream of our presence.

VII.

“ O ! being of beauty and bliss ! seen and known
In the deeps of my soul, and possess'd there alone !
My days know thee not, and my lips name thee never.
Thy place in my poor life is vacant for ever.
We have met ; we have parted ; no more is recorded
In thy annals on earth. This alone was afforded
To the man whom men know me, or deem me to be.
But far down, in the depths of my life's mystery
Thou abidest and reignest for ever, O Queen.”

OWEN MEREDITH.

WHEN night came on, pretending to be very tired, I dismissed all my ladies except Blanche, and with her I retired to the little chapel which formed the last room of my apartments in the palace. Beyond it there was a long gallery seldom used except on state occasions, for it gave access only to the throne room, and to the banqueting hall beyond. When I thought all the people about the palace had retired for the night, Blanche and I opened the little back door of the chapel, a door unknown to most people, for it was hidden by the tapestry which lined the walls ; and in the dark, for we were afraid of causing any suspicion, traversed the long gallery, the throne room, and the immense banqueting hall, which were dimly lighted by the pale rays of the moon, as ever and

anon she appeared between the dark threatening clouds, and threw deep and ghastly shadows across those stately but cold and comfortless apartments.

On the other side of the banqueting hall was the state staircase which, like the rest of this particular part of the palace, was but seldom used, and here we were met by the two pages who were to accompany us on our secret expedition. I had chosen them on account of their proved fidelity to me, and I knew I could depend upon them. We all four descended the staircase in silence, passed through another long gallery which was below the banqueting hall, and in which the door of the secret passage was hidden. Neither Blanche nor the pages knew of this door, nor even of the existence of the passage, for in those days this important secret was only revealed to the sovereign and his family, having been constructed for the purpose of facilitating their escape in case of any sudden emergency. But I was well aware of the passage, for Philip himself had taken care to point out this secret door to me when we first came to inhabit that grand palace. So in a few minutes more we were out of the building, and walking through the long spacious gallery ; the pages had now lighted their torches, for discovery was out of the question once in the secret passage. And so we proceeded down the gentle decline until the confused noise over our heads of running waters told us we were under the river.

Soon afterwards we had ascended a steep staircase, and were comfortably seated in a large chamber of the ancient manor-house, where Don Cesar and the Prince had been already waiting some time for us.

For propriety's sake I ordered my maid-of-honour to remain near me, and I requested Don Carlos to give orders that his friend should also remain in the room.

During the first half-hour we talked earnestly about his projects and plans. As I had guessed the unfortunate Prince was indeed most unhappy in Madrid ; he knew that his father suspected and disliked him ; and between his passion for me, which he could scarcely conceal, and his hatred for the king, which he feared not to avow, he was miserable and disheartened. In Flanders, on the other hand, a crown was offered to him, numerous friends awaited him, and a whole nation longed for his arrival, for they all looked upon him as their sole hope.

"The temptation is too great, my queen," he said ; "I know that what I am going to do is wrong ; but is it not still worse to remain here between you, whom I love, and the king, whom I hate, for God alone knows what crime in some supreme moment of despair I may not be led to commit ?"

The colour that had suddenly suffused his cheeks, when he reminded me of his love, as suddenly left it when he said this.

He looked at me for an instant, then turned his head away and buried his face in his hands.

In the distress which his words caused me I forgot for one moment the barrier between us, the barrier which divided us so completely, and, moving my chair close to his, I drew his hand from his face, saying :—"Do not weep like a boy, Don Carlos, do not weep, but bear your sorrow like a man, bear it for my sake—remain! remain! for—I love you!"

I should not have said this, but ah me! where is the faultless human creature, who can persevere in a good resolution without sometimes fainting and falling back? Where is the woman who has ever really torn from her heart the image that has been once engraved upon it by true love?

In my anxiety to prevent his departure for the Netherlands, and the dreadful consequences in which it would have involved him, I had actually confessed my love for him, that love which for so long I had hidden secretly in my heart, and which I had succeeded so well in keeping from everyone, even from him!

As I looked up in despair to see what effect my unexpected avowal had produced, I saw that both Don Cesar and Blanche were in tears, and that respect for their master and mistress alone prevented them from falling into each others' arms; so similar seemed their own situation to ours—

so similar and yet so different !—for at that time Blanche was still free and might yet be his.

The tears of Don Carlos were dried now. “Thy words, Elisabeth, give me courage, they give me a new life ! Ah, Elisabeth, let me call thee thus here, where neither the tyrant that rules our fate, nor any of his creatures, can hear me. God alone knows how I have fought against this mad passion, which now consumes my heart—my courage has given way at last—I have strained my self-command to its utmost, and it has given way, I can control myself no longer, Elisabeth, Elisabeth, I love you !”

“Stop, stop, in the name of the blessed sacrament, say no more !”

“No, I may have no other opportunity of speaking to you, of revealing what I suffer to the only woman I love—what I am suffering for her sake. You were mine, you had been given to me by two great nations, heaven and earth had joined us ; I was brought up believing you to be my destined wife ; and I loved you since I first beheld your portrait ; nay, you may smile, but I feel within me something that tells me I loved you before, yes even before I was born ! Perhaps, who knows, we two may have loved each other before our unhappy fate made us princes ; for otherwise how can we account for this sudden, but unextinguishable passion which all at once germinated in our hearts, and took full possession

of our beings? But we were born princes, and over our destinies ruled supreme, two kings; and these kings severed our lives, these kings broke the engagement which heaven and earth had sanctioned, and God himself had blessed, and married you to another; but, Elisabeth, I too shall be king some day, and then . . .”

“Ah yes, the new king will be all-powerful—he can annul all that the former king has done—he can desecrate the house of God—he can put to death all his enemies—nay, who shall prevent him? He can disinter his father’s body—he can have the corpse dragged through the streets tied to the tail of his horse, and then burn it, and scatter the desecrated ashes to the winds, and lastly, to finish his work of a king and a despot . . .”

“In the name of God say no more!”

“He can marry his father’s widow!”

Don Carlos gave a cry of horror, and once more sunk back upon his chair, the tears now streaming from his eyes.

I was very much moved. “Carlos!” I exclaimed, “. . . Carlos, forget what I have said; my heart told me as I said it that I was talking wildly. I know you to possess a noble heart—a heart worthy of what God in His wise judgment has destined you for; to be one day king of the fairest country under the sun. You will then be all-powerful, great, and mighty, yet in this life we can never hope to be

happy—to bear our fate we must conquer it—let us bear ours patiently, and perhaps some day in another world . . . who knows? But do not let us lose all our chances of future happiness in the eternity that awaits us beyond the grave, for the few moments of forbidden joy we might manage to steal from our present situation. In the meantime let us be what human nature and worldly forms so seldom allow those of opposite sexes to be—friends to each other, and to virtue also—friends through all the vicissitudes of life—friends on whose affections shame and remorse can cast no shade. Carlos, let me be your mother! Is there a tie holier? Can there be an attachment so true, so lasting? Let us base our mutual love on loyalty and honour; let our love be such, as love would be if the heart and the soul were unadulterated by clay . . .”

I could say no more, my voice failed me, but I had conquered; the spell was broken, the temptation overcome, the ordeal past.

Don Carlos rose from his chair, and spoke; and every word he said was uttered with that thrilling distinctness which seems as if the depth of the heart spoke in the voice, and yet there was no pathos in his intonation, only entire self-possession.

“Elisabeth,” he said, “you have conquered, fear nought from me henceforward, for your noble words have raised all woman-kind in my eyes,

and from this hour my love has changed to adoration and respect. Forget, oh, forget! if you can, all of me that can cost you a pang to remember. I shall often think of you, but only as of an angel. I shall console myself for the loss of your love by becoming worthy of your confidence, of your esteem, of your sympathy”

His eyes met mine, and seemed to sink deep into my heart, with a heartsearching gaze which I could not resist. A cry as if of despair broke from him. “Oh that no barrier were between us!” But this was the last struggle.

A short silence reigned in the room, during which I could hear the suppressed sobs of Don Cesar and of Blanche, and even the palpitation of the Prince’s heart. Then one more word escaped him. “Mother!” and he fell half-senseless into my arms. Unconsciously I pressed him to my breast, and my head was bent over his, my lips were going to impress upon that noble brow one first and last kiss—a kiss of motherly love—when my ear caught the sound of approaching steps, and the tramp of horses upon the ground beneath the windows.

“We are discovered,” screamed Blanche, running towards the window, and drawing the heavy tapestry curtains across them, a precaution that we should have taken before, had we not been a great deal too confident of the secrecy of this interview.

"We are betrayed!" was all I could utter. But there was no time for useless despair now, for the men, whoever they were, had dismounted, and we could hear their voices on the stairs. Don Cesar rushed to the door and locked it. A pause now ensued, during which the most dreadful presentiments passed through our minds. Then a loud severe voice shouted from the outside.

"Prince Don Carlos, unlock this door."

We all recognised the voice of Philip II., and we looked at each other in speechless amazement and horror.

Don Cesar, however, who was the only one who had not lost his presence of mind, in a low and hurried voice, said :

"Some officious courtier has undoubtedly informed his Majesty, who was this week hunting at the Pardo, that Don Carlos was coming here. Now only two reasons could have induced His Royal Highness to come to this deserted home—a love-affair or a conspiracy. If the king sees your Majesty in his son's company, he will immediately come to the conclusion that either the queen conspires with the prince against him, or that she is in love with him ; in either case, you are lost, madam, and so is the prince. No explanation that can be given will satisfy him ; the only thing to do is for your Majesty to hide herself ; and then, when Philip enters the room, finding His Highness alone with a young lady"

“Oh, never! never!” broke in the terrified Blanche; “he will think I am his mistress!”

“It is the only way of saving her Majesty’s honour—perhaps her life.”

“But would you sacrifice the honour of your beloved Blanche, to save mine?” I said.

“Her honour will soon be mine,” answered the noble fellow, “and I would gladly sacrifice—I do not say my honour or that of my wife—but my life, nay, her life, which is far dearer to me, to save my queen and my friend.”

“I will not be less noble than you, Cesar. Madam, for God’s sake, hide yourself. Prince, take my hand and let us go and undo that door; surely there cannot be much harm in a prince like your Highness making love to a poor maid-of-honour like me, particularly as it is not in earnest!”

I rushed across the room, and kissed the brave girl on both her soft, round cheeks, which were flushed and burning as my lips touched them; and then stepping into the deep casement of the nearest window, I beckoned to Don Cesar to follow my example. “The king had better find them alone,” I said; “the presence of a third person might throw suspicion on the whole matter. Come here with me, I too shall feel safer if I have you near me—come.”

Don Cesar followed me into the deep recess, and then we drew the curtains before us, so that

no one could even have suspected our presence in that room. The whole of this scene, as you may imagine, did not occupy above a minute, for he voice of the king resounded like thunder outside the door, while every now and then he gave a violent blow against it with the hilt of his sword.

“Prince Don Carlos, Prince Don Carlos,” he shouted every time in a more angry voice, “open the door to the king!”

The prince drew his sword to protect Blanche from any unexpected attack, and then walked to the door, and with a trembling hand unfastened the lock.

VIII.

“ Quid frustra simulacra fugacia captas ?
Quod petis est nusquam.”

OVID.

THE door flew open and Philip II. entered. The lofty hall in one instant seemed dwarfed by the height from which the imperial eyes of the great king poured the light of their deep, silent majesty upon the Infante; and no wonder the latter should feel, as it were, his very stature shrink under that grave and severe regard.

“ Doña Blanca ! ” were his first words, an exclamation of involuntary surprise which he could not restrain, having been so little prepared to see that particular young lady in the solitary Casa de Campo. He then turned round towards the numerous gentlemen and soldiers who had entered the room after him, and in his usual tone of voice commanded them to take the lady away, and to leave him alone with the prince. When the soldiers approached to surround the youthful maid-of-honour, Don Carlos, with an almost involuntary movement, raised the sword which he held in his hand, but his eyes met the king’s, his whole frame trembled, and the sword fell with a crash to the ground.

Though scarcely a single muscle moved in the lofty countenance of Philip; though no frown darkened the majestic brow of the great king; though no fire broke from the steadfast and scornful eyes of the proud father; yet there was so much kingly authority in his aspect, in the extended arm, the stately bearing, such a power in the swell of the stern, commanding voice, that it awed and quelled the unhappy Carlos, who was already unmanned by the strong emotions he had gone through that day. His father looked at him with a crushing disdain. He looked at him with the cold eye of a cruel and unrelenting despot, not with the tender looks of a loving and forgiving father. So his lips trembled, and his voice died away in hollow murmurs, when he tried to oppose the soldiers, who, obeying the orders of the monarch, were carrying the poor, frightened Blanche out of the apartment, to convey her he knew not, and dared not think whither.

"Whose sword is this?" asked Philip, as soon as they were alone.

"Mine, sire," answered the Prince.

"A sword is an arm too noble in the hands of a traitor" — so saying he picked it up from the ground, and humbly kissed the gold cross which formed the handle. "The sword of my great father the Emperor, by the Holy Sacrament! See, see what thou hast come to, noble sword, thou who didst so much execution in the brave hand

of my father, art now vilely dishonoured by the hand of my son !”

Don Carlos felt all his young blood rushing to his head, his hands were clenched, but he dared not betray his rising anger before his severe and all-powerful father ; so bending one knee, he hid his face in his hands, but could not master his voice enough to say one word.

“ Yes, that is the position that best becomes you, Prince Don Carlos, and thus you shall be for long, long years to come. As to that noble sword, you shall never use it again. . . . I shall give it to another prince, . . . for God will give me another son. . . . He will not forget his most devoted servant, . . . yes, I will give that sword to the future king of Spain, who will redeem its once spotless honour. . . .”

“ Sire, sire, what do you intend to do with me ?” exclaimed the unhappy prince, hot tears of indignation rising to his eyes, and falling slowly down his flushed cheeks, as he raised his face to look at the cold, impassive countenance of the king, who only murmured one word—“ Coward !”

He could contain himself no longer, and rising from his kneeling posture, he walked slowly towards Philip, and confronted him as he would have done an equal ; and it was now the king’s turn to feel moved. It would have seemed as if all at once a mask had fallen from his face, for all his features had suddenly undergone such a change

that no one at that moment could have imagined those eyes, half-bathed in tears, that compressed mouth, those flushed cheeks, that brow evidently clouded by grief, to belong to the severe and stately Philip of Austria ; whose will was law, who was believed by all to be above any tender feelings, to be beyond all human emotions.

With one hand he took hold of his son's arm, while with the other he searched in the folds of his hunting doublet, which he still wore—for the news of the prince's journey to the Casa de Campo had been communicated to him, while hunting at the Pardo ; and he had ridden straight off to interrupt any conspiracy that might take place there during his absence, without giving himself the time even to change his garments—for something which lay there concealed. The prince followed his movements with an eager gaze, and was not a little surprised and alarmed when the king produced a packet of letters which he immediately recognised as those he had recently written to the chiefs of the revolutionary party in the Netherlands ; and amongst them there was also a letter from the Prince of Orange, offering him his assistance, if he decided to quit Spain.

"Are these letters yours?" asked the king. Don Carlos was too astonished to answer at first, and the question was repeated the second time, in a softer voice—"Are these letters yours?"

"I cannot deny it ; I see that I have been

betrayed ; your Majesty has me in your power ; after this I cannot complain of any treatment I may henceforward receive at your Majesty's hands."

"Rash, foolish prince !" exclaimed the king, walking slowly up and down the room. "So your ambition to mount a throne is actually so great that you would revolt against your own father ! To climb those slippery steps, those steps so frequently stained with blood. Do you know what it is to reign ? No, you do not know the miseries, the hardships, the horrors attached to that position. To reign is to be in constant warfare ; war with the enemies outside the country, and at war with the rebels at home. To reign is not to have one minute's peace, one moment's happiness ; to live, sleep, and die, holding in one hand the sword of battle, in the other the sword of justice—to reign is to kill to massacre—to destroy ; to fight day and night to obtain a few moments of peace ; to destroy the life of a thousand to preserve the existence of a few. To reign is to sit upon a throne so lofty, so far apart from the rest of mankind, that no human happiness or sympathy can reach it, and yet, when there one is exposed to every blast of changing fate. Too high for hope, too great for joy. To be envied, never admired ; to be feared, never loved. To reign is to bear the miseries of a whole nation, and yet to receive no thanks ; to hear their murmurs, feel their discon-

tents, dread their awakening powers, and yet to pretend one trusts them and believes them true. To have all your success ascribed to fortune, and all fortune's failures ascribed to you. To reign is to represent God, and to try and rule like Him without His wisdom, His power, His strength. A king is denied both family and friends; he must stand alone upon that dizzy height like the solitary rock in the middle of the ocean, against which the waves dash at every moment, exposed to the wind and the lightning, to the sea and the rain, which no man pities, and which all hate and dread. And then, to be held responsible, not only before men, but to God himself, for every action of one's life, and those of one's subjects; and not only for their actions, but for their faith, their mistakes, and their failures! Oh! it is well that the mantle of a king is a bright one, that his crown sparkles with a hundred gems, and that his sceptre dazzles the eyes of all beholders, or else, who would undertake such a heavy responsibility? And you, rash, foolish, reckless boy, are so anxious to reign, that you would mount the most perilous throne in Europe, even though you must walk over your father's corpse to reach it! Unfortunate child!"

"Ah! Sire, I have no father, your Majesty himself says kings can have no sons!"

"You have no father! Ah! Carlos, Carlos, how you have misjudged me, how you have belied

me ! Did your heart never tell you that in spite of my station I was but a man, and that this horrible mask of supreme indifference which the world forces a king to assume, was but a mask, behind which the warm tender heart of a father—of a loving father—might be hidden, to be disclosed only when the right moment came ? Did the thought never cross your mind that my policy in the Netherlands was entirely owing to the love I bear you, and yet it is because I love my son, and would have him receive the Spanish crown as rich and as powerful as I received it from the hands of my good father, that I have fought the rebels to the last ? And you, foolish youth, would aid the very enemies of your family, and become their willing slave, instead of waiting patiently for the day when you will be called to rule over them !

“ If you did not exist, if I did not love you, my only son and heir, do you think that I would take so much trouble, and pass so many sleepless nights, to preserve those northern provinces, which most likely I shall never care to see again ? No, it is only on your account, it is only for you that I toil day and night ; it is because I would have my beloved son the greatest king in Europe, that I persecute the rebels. The English queen, that proud infidel, and the new German emperor, my uncle though he be, and even His Holiness himself, would gladly declare war against me, why ?

Because they fear my power ! And to protect myself, to save Spain, and to preserve the kingdom prosperous and entire for you, I was compelled to marry a French princess, though it almost broke my heart, for I knew you loved her ! But I was as wise as well as a loving father, and I knew that, however strong your infatuation for a woman whom you had never yet seen, a kingdom was preferable to a wife !”

“ You weep, sire !” broke in Don Carlos, seeing the tears which ran down Philip’s cheeks, and which seemed so out of place on that austere and severe countenance.

“ Here no one sees us, but God, who has known my heart from the very first, and you, who are my son !”

“ Oh, speak always thus to me, and I would gladly die for you. I never knew you until now. I believed you to be . . . oh, no ! no, let me forget it all now, it has been a sad cruel dream, but I am awake now, and I have at last found my true friend . . . my father.”

And he fell upon the king’s neck, who did not shrink from that, the first filial embrace he had ever received in his life ; for he was too much moved to remember the part he usually played so well.

Both Don Cesar and I were also much moved by this scene of which we were the involuntary and unseen witnesses, an accident for which I re-

peatedly thanked God, for it showed me a side of my husband's character, which otherwise would have remained for ever unknown to me. And after what had passed that night between the father and the son, I could no longer hate Philip, nor even dislike him any more, however little I might, even now, be able to sympathise with his gloomy and grand genius, which forced him to be kingly even in his love.

After a silence of a few moments' duration, we heard once more the voice of the king, who said, "Take these letters, Carlos, take them, and burn them, for they are steeped in blood!"

"Oh, father!"

"The Counts d' Egmont and Horn have fallen under the headsman's axe, and you would have placed your life in their hands! Take these letters, they burn my fingers, let no one see them, that no one should suspect, even for one second, that you, my son, once thought of revolting against me. I forgive you, would to God that I could as easily forget your crimes as you will forget my forgiveness. I do not ask you for the names of the other conspirators; I will not force you to betray those who doubtless would have betrayed you had you once been in their power; but I will find them out and they shall perish. Your honour shall be saved at all hazards. Do you recognize your father now?"

“Ah yes, I see you love me ; but with such a love . . . I can hardly understand !”

“Be not too sure of my love, or rely too much on your father’s affection ; if the lesson this unfortunate affair of Flanders has afforded you does not make you desist from all further rebellion against my authority ; if you persist in your frivolous conduct, unworthy of a Prince of Spain and a son of Austria ; if I arrive at the horrible conclusion, in spite of all my efforts to think well of you, that when I die, when I leave you my crown, I bequeath to my subjects a king not worthy of them, a tyrant, not a father, an infidel and not a devout Christian . . . then, oh prince But God will never permit such a dreadful event to take place ; I will build a church in the Escorial, with an altar of pure gold, as a voto that this should never happen. I will manage to appease the just wrath of God with the blood of all the heretics throughout my dominions ; I will cover my head with ashes and do public penance, so that God may preserve my hand from ever being stained with the blood of a son—of a son I love better than my own life . . . but whom I would rather see dead at my feet than an infidel and an unworthy king. Ah, Carlos, Carlos, if you knew how I suffer . . . ! Spain ; and my son ; I am divided between the two ; let me still dream that the happiness of one will be

the happiness of the other, and that both will owe their happiness to me !”

If the prince had been able to perceive the past, and to pierce through the inscrutable ways of an all-wise and divine Providence, he would at that moment have recognized in his zealous, severe, stern, but yet tender-hearted father, the spirit of that strong, proud, beloved and yet relentless being, who preferred power to happiness, and who willingly sacrificed her own happiness for that of Spain. In other words, Recesvinto, the Goth, would have recognized SERENA. But you were no longer the warm-hearted Gothic warrior whose heart was divided between two loves ; and the spirit of the then barbarous but yet glorious Spanish maiden had by this time developed itself into that of the great monarch, the powerful and much dreaded, but yet greatly loved Philip II.

Circumstances had changed ; for many many years had elapsed, but the same school-fellows of old had once more met in this earthly school-house, and their old friendship was revived ; for an earth-life, as I have told you, is but an education of the spirit, and the little differences that had cooled their ancient love were now past and forgotten ; for only what is true and good remains unaltered until the end.

The father and son remained for some time clasped in a loving embrace, an embrace that seemed a reminiscence of the past, though neither of them

could at the time have explained why. After another long silence it was the king who again spoke.

“When I was informed this afternoon in the hunting-field, that you were coming to this lonely house in secret, I immediately suspected, knowing the nature of the correspondence you had been carrying on for some time past with the rebellious Dutch, that you were coming to meet some of their party to decide upon a final plan of action ; and so I left the Pardo that very instant, and hastened here to interrupt the interview, and to save my poor misguided son from the snares of the heretics. But I see I have been mistaken, for I find you alone—alone with a young lady.” The King paused for one moment, and through the holes of the old tapestry, which concealed me from his sight, I saw him change colour when he suddenly recollected the presence of Blanche in that room at his entrance ; a circumstance which his subsequent emotion had caused him, I suppose, to forget. “I see, Carlos, that the interview I have interrupted was one of love. Carlos, Carlos, you are indeed unfortunate,—why fall in love precisely with that woman—the only woman in the whole world who can never become your wife ? Forget her . . . or rather love her, but with a different love—with a purer, holier, love—for she is your sister !”

If a thunder-bolt had fallen at the feet of that other listener, Don Cesar, I scarcely think he would

have been more horrified ; he trembled from head to foot, and was obliged to lean heavily against me for support. I too was struck mute at this unexpected avowal ; but my position was so critical, that I soon regained my self-command, and once more remained motionless behind the curtain ; for I knew that the least movement of its folds would unavoidably reveal our presence to my husband. Fortunately Philip was too much excited at that moment to notice any such trifling incident as the stirring of a window curtain, a trifle, however, which at any other time would have attracted his attention.

“ You have committed a great crime, Prince, in even thinking of that woman, but you were innocent, for neither you, nor she, knew me to be her father ; the fault has been mine therefore, and I will write as soon as possible to the Holy Father to ask his absolution for it ; and you do not know how much such absolution will cost *me*, for Rome knows only too well the value of my soul !—but I deserve that this should have happened, the crime that caused her birth could not well remain unpunished ; though I *did* try to make atonement for it by placing her in a convent, and dedicating her to God from her youth.”

The Prince was too much astonished with this unexpected disclosure to listen to his father's words, and kept repeating half aloud, “ Blanche my sister ! Blanche ! Can it be possible ! ”

“ Yes, Carlos ;—though born a royal Prince, and the son of a mighty Emperor, I was only a man like the rest of human-kind. I was young, inexperienced, no one dared to oppose my will, for my father was always away in some distant campaign or other, and my tutors and guardians feared too much to displease the future king to dare to oppose my desires. I was young, as I have told you, and my blood was warm. I fell in love twice—only twice—and both the women I loved returned my love without much persuasion, for I was the Prince of Spain, the son of the Emperor ! Of these two passions of my youth, the only ones I have ever experienced, were born a son and a daughter ; the first, you know already, is Don Cesar de Castro, whom I would long ago have recognised as my son (as my father recognised *his* natural children), and would have raised him to the dignity of Prince, the same as my half-brother Don Juan of Austria, had not his mother, Doña Luz de Castro, implored me not to do so ; the second is the fair girl who was in this room half-an-hour ago, Doña Blanca of Austria, or, as you call her, Blanche. As I have told you, I placed her soon after her birth in a convent in the north of Italy, from which it seems the late war drove her away. She fled to Paris, and there the Princess Elisabeth, with that natural kindness of heart which is peculiar to her, took care of the poor girl, and brought her with her to Spain.

You may easily imagine my astonishment when I discovered in the maid-of-honour of my wife my own daughter! I would even then have recognised her openly as mine, but the maiden innocence of my gentle wife deterred me. I dared not confess my past sins to the youthful companion fate had allotted to me. I respected her virgin mind, and allowed her to live together with her adopted maid-of-honour—who, I was much pleased to see, had become her greatest friend—in happy ignorance of her relationship to me, her own husband! Yet I have not forgotten my beloved daughter, and I still watch anxiously over her happiness; to assure which, when I am gone, I have arranged that she shall marry the Duke de Feria, one of the noblest of the Spanish grandees; who, when he heard she was my daughter, was only too happy to offer her his proud name and immense revenues. I have thus provided for her happiness in the future, and I still wish her to remain unacknowledged as my daughter, on account of her friendship with the Queen, my wife; and now, to my horror, I discover that you, my legitimate son, have fallen in love with *her*—with your own sister! Oh, the idea is too horrible! This must end here, this very night I will reveal myself to her as her father; as for you, you must try and forget her . . .”

“No, I shall not forget her, Sire; I shall, on the contrary, love her more than ever now that

I know her to be my sister, for my love towards her was never more than that of a brother for a sister, I can assure your Majesty of that."

"You restore peace to my heart once more, Carlos; you do not know how happy those words make me . . . Ah, let me now return to Madrid. I see that we understand each other once more; and this time I trust you will not again forget the obedience you owe to your king, and to your father—to your father who loves you, remember that . . . Oh, how happy we shall all be now! Let Spain and the Church rejoice. I have won my son's heart, and he shall defend you both when I am gone."

The King put his arm through that of the Prince, and father and son left the room together, apparently in the best of spirits; but as they passed before the window in which Don Cesar and I were concealed, I heard the latter mutter to himself, "Poor Cesar! poor Cesar! my heart bleeds for thee!"

When the King and his son were safely out of the room, I lifted the heavy tapestry which had so effectually concealed us, and once more breathed freely, as I sank into the arm-chair in which my husband had reclined only a few minutes before. When I looked up I saw Don Cesar de Castro still standing in the window recess, pale and motionless, as a statue—a statue of despair! I

rose and approached him ; I took his hand in mine, it was hot and burning ; I would have given worlds to have been able to offer him some words of consolation, some little encouragement, but I could say nothing,—his grief was beyond cure, and I knew it.

In silence we opened the door of the secret passage, in silence we descended the damp stairs, and in silence we regained the royal palace on the other side of the river. Our eyes met more than once, but our lips remained sealed ; what we had learned that night had dispersed all his dreams of future joy ; rent his heart, made him and happiness strangers for evermore ; for even hope was now beyond his reach.

But behold, dearest Walter, the night is passing away even while I speak. See in yonder skies over the towers of Guanabacoa the day begins to break. I must leave you once more—farewell, retire to rest as soon as possible ; but before doing so, do not forget to thank God that the days of those dreadful trials I have been relating to you this night are now over for our spirits, and that happiness and love alone await us in the great boundless future.

NIGHT THE FIFTEENTH.

“Yes, it was love, if thoughts of tenderness
Tried in temptation, strongest by distress,
Unmov'd by absence, firm in every clime,
And yet, O! more than all! unstir'd by time;
Which naught remov'd, nor menac'd to remove.
If there be love in mortals, *this* is love.”

I.

“That night had divided his whole life in two.
Behind him a Past that was over for ever ;
Before him a Future devoid of endeavour
And purpose. He felt a remorse for the one,
Of the other a fear. What remained to be done ?
Whither now should he turn ? Turn again, as before,
To his old, easy, careless existence of yore ?
He could not. He felt that for better or worse
A change had pass’d o’er him ; an angry remorse
Of his own frantic failure and error had marr’d
Such a refuge for ever. The future seem’d barr’d
By the corpse of a dead hope o’er which he must tread
To attain it. He realised then all the dread
Conditions, which go to a life without faith.”

OWEN MEREDITH.

AFTER that memorable night in the Casa de Campo, the whole life of Don Carlos underwent a great change ; he tried hard to banish from his heart all thoughts of love for me, for he was now convinced of the sin of encouraging that love ; yet he never ceased for one moment to mourn over the one great disappointment of his life. Three years later, when I again take up the course of his unfortunate history, he had learnt to bear this disappointment, and could speak of it calmly enough ; but he had not forgotten it : and even then, in spite of the great distance of time which now

separated him from those painful scenes of Guadalajara and Aranjuez, their remembrance, ever fresh in his mind, cast a deep and melancholy shade over all his thoughts and actions.

During the few months that immediately followed the scenes I related to you the other night, the father and son had been on the best of terms; but their friendship had again grown gradually cooler and cooler. Philip was too much occupied with the affairs of State to pay much attention to the prince; and the prince, in spite of the love he knew his stern father really bore him, could hardly sympathise with him, for he always feared him too much ever to entertain any stronger feeling than gratitude towards the king, who was his father.

He had now given up all thoughts of joining the revolutionists in the Netherlands, who were every day increasing, in spite of the vigorous punishments inflicted upon them by the Duchess of Parma, one of the late Emperor's natural daughters, who had been named Governor of Flanders, and who mercilessly killed and burnt all who refused to acknowledge the sovereignty of the King of Spain over their country, and that of the Pope over their souls. Yet the prince's noble heart could not see all this going on and remain silent. The despotic and tyrannical conduct of his father, both in Spain—where, however, the people were too frightened to utter one

word of complaint—and in the various provinces and colonies of his vast empire, went so much against his heart and against his conscience, that he thought it his duty to try and interfere. And this alone proves that neither courage nor determination were wanting in his character; yet the king's policy was approved by the Pope, who dared not openly contradict the most powerful monarch in Christendom; and was sustained by the Inquisition, which at that time exercised supreme authority over the consciences of all good Catholics throughout the Christian world; so that instead of doing any good by his interference, the unfortunate prince only drew upon himself the enmity and hatred of the king's ministers and courtiers, to whose interests it was that the wars should continue, and that of the most powerful officers of the Inquisition, who of course wished the persecutions to proceed.

In the course of time, however, the whole of Europe was more or less shocked at the cruel policy adopted by the Cabinet of the Escorial towards the insurgents, whose misfortunes rendered them the general objects of foreign pity. The English queen, herself a Protestant, and for that age a liberal-minded woman, openly expressed her displeasure, and so did most of the other sovereigns; until Philip gave everybody to understand that the persecutions would cease, and that he himself, accompanied by the whole of his Court, would

proceed to the Netherlands and arrange matters peaceably. Don Carlos was to accompany him ; and to flatter the prince's vanity, and occupy his mind for the moment, he gave orders that all the deliberations of State which concerned the journey should in future take place in the Infante's presence. Everyone believed the king's word, and ambassadors were actually sent to Brussels to await his arrival ; the French king, through whose dominions he was to pass, gave orders to the different governors of the various provinces, and to the mayors of the principal towns, that the King of Spain should be received with all due honour ; but the journey was postponed from day to day, from month to month, and Philip, after holding the whole of Europe in breathless suspense for the space of two years, confessed at last that he had never for one moment thought of leaving Spain !

Thus he had managed to dupe the foreign powers, and to pursue undisturbed for two years longer his work of destruction in Flanders ; but at the end of this long lapse of time, what had he actually gained ? The Dutch were more discontented than ever ; the Reformation had been gaining ground steadily in spite of all his efforts to check it ; and he had revealed the great secret of his policy to the eyes of Europe !

Don Carlos was thoroughly disgusted when he at last discovered the true nature of this farce,

which had been so well acted, that even he, the inmate of the royal palace, and before whom all the deliberations relating to the voyage had taken place, had been duped like the rest.

After this, it is not to be wondered at that any affection or respect he might have entertained for the king his father should have vanished for ever. The deception practised upon him had been great, and his indignation knew no bounds, for *he* had been in real earnest all the time ; and as his anger could not reach the king, it naturally turned itself against his ministers and advisers. When the Duke of Alba, who was now again to be despatched to the Netherlands at the head of a great army, presented himself, according to etiquette, in his apartments to offer him his respects before starting, the prince actually reproached him openly with misleading the king, and of preferring the laurels he might gain in a war fatal to Spain, to the honour and prosperity of his country. The Duke had never been on the best of terms with Don Carlos, and ever since that scene in the Cathedral of Toledo their enmity had been no secret to the whole world ; so now that the proud nobleman was thus openly accused by the prince, he immediately betook himself to the king's apartment, and in his turn accused the prince of insulting *him*—the greatest General of the age, and the best friend of his sovereign, and requested immediate satisfaction. This, of course, the

Prince of Spain would not give; so the Duke left Madrid swearing revenge, and Philip refused to see his son, and declared him unworthy of his regard.

This, joined to the apparent disregard of Don Carlos to the king's wishes, respecting his marriage with the Princess Anne of Bohemia, granddaughter of the Emperor Ferdinand, created a coolness between them that was never destined to be overcome.

I must also add that before this he had refused to marry Elizabeth, the Queen of England (who, by the bye, had never offered him her hand), and also Marie Stuart, the Queen of Scotland, now a widow by the death of my brother, the King of France; but the truth was that Don Carlos had made up his mind never to marry without love; and he felt none for either of these princesses, though they were in every respect worthy of becoming his wife.

During these last three years I too had been sorely tried. To my great horror I had discovered that the chief object of the French government in marrying me to the King of Spain had been that of attaining through me a complete and detailed knowledge of all the secrets of State pertaining to the Spanish government. Almost every day I received letters either from the queen, my mother, or from her sons, and even from their ministers, asking me to find out Philip's intentions

about various matters, and questions which more or less concerned the welfare of France.

“Remember, my dear daughter,” wrote Catherine de Medicis in one of her numerous letters to me, “that you are a French woman, and that, therefore, the interests of your native country should naturally be the first object with you. As the wife of the King of Spain you should know all his secrets, and as the eldest daughter of France, it is your duty to reveal them to me.”

Forquevaux, the French ambassador, was continually coming to my private apartments and begging of me to write a detailed account of all I knew and heard, to my mother, the queen-regent ; but I invariably refused to do so. The Cabinet of the Louvre had injured me sufficiently in selling me, as they had done, to a man for whom I could never entertain the slightest affection or regard ; but they should not make me sink so low as to become their spy, and betray my husband's secrets, that their task of governing France might be rendered easier.

Catherine de Medicis, with her passion for politics and love of secret plots and counter-plots, which had taken such full possession of her since her husband's death, and to which she had now given herself up entirely, was furious with me ; while, on the other hand, Philip, fearing that her influence would, in the long run, be too great for me to resist, had me constantly watched ; so that

between the two, my dear Walter, you may well imagine what I suffered, not to speak of my dislike for Philip, which every day grew greater, and of my love for Carlos, which, do what I would, it was impossible for me ever to forget ; and yet, I daresay, there was hardly one woman in the whole of Europe who would not have gladly given half her lifetime to occupy my position ; but such is life, and I might have wisely and truly said with Anne Boleyn—

“ I swear ’tis better to be lowly born,
And range with humble livers in content,
Than to be perked up in a glistening grief,
And wear a golden sorrow.”

Thus had passed those last three years of our lives, of which, if I had time, I would give you a more detailed account ; for though not very eventful in themselves, yet the events that occurred soon afterwards, and the final catastrophe which was so soon to put an end to all our trials and sufferings, were so closely connected with them that I hardly know if I shall be able to relate this to you, without giving you, at least, a slight idea of what happened during that time.

But I daresay you are anxious to know what had become of the unfortunate Don Cesar de Castro and his sister all this time. Blanche had been formally declared the daughter of the king, and was now known throughout the kingdom as Doña Blanca de Austria ; but as she ignored that her

lover was also the king's son, and as both he and I, dreading to ruin her happiness, had delayed from day to day to impart to her the fatal secret, she was still full of joy and hope. Her projected union with the Duke de Feria had not yet been given up, though, according to her wishes, the king had delayed it over and over again. She still shrank from having to confess to her father and king that she would never consent to marry him, and yet, so thankful was she to the king for his consideration and for his great kindness, that she would not for the world have married without his consent.

As for Don Cesar—what can I say about him? He knew the dreadful secret, and yet he loved Blanche more than ever; in vain he tried to believe that this fatal relationship was a mistake, that they were both suffering from the consequences of mistaken identity, and that the real daughter of Philip was still somewhere or other in Italy. But he had no proof of all this, in fact, he had no reasonable grounds to hope for such a happy conclusion to his great unhappiness. The king had recognised his daughter from the first—at least, so he assured us all,—and now that we knew her to be his daughter, it was impossible not to recognise the likeness which existed between them, though it is true, it was a very vague one; her chin was small and delicate, and quite unlike that of Philip, and this, as you know, was the one great peculiarity of

the Austrian family ; yet she was fair like him, and her other features bore a certain resemblance to his. After all this, hope only existed in the poor lover's heart ; yet, however unlikely the idea might be that Blanche was not his sister, it still helped him to struggle on with energy and self-possession until the last ; and gave him hope, which led him to the gate through which we were all to enter into a happier life at last. But I am looking forward to that brighter time which my narrative has not yet reached. So, I will back again, yes, back to the days of doubt and dread, when the soul within us still struggled hard to see its way, and to attain its perfection through these harassing trials of perpetual suspense.

II.

“The horrible secret I dare not reveal, yet can no longer conceal.”

WALTER SCOTT.

THIS was more or less the course events had taken, when one day something happened which forced me, much to my regret, to write to the Prince.

This was only the second letter I had written to him since my marriage, although we had corresponded freely before, with the full consent of both our fathers. The first note had been merely a few lines of congratulation, which common politeness forced me to address to him on his recovery from his dangerous illness at Alcala.

This time, however, my letter to him was of a very different nature, and required a certain amount of secrecy; I entrusted it therefore to my faithful Blanche, whom I requested to deliver it either into the hands of the Prince, or into those of Don Cesar, whom I could also trust, but to no one else.

It seems that she met her lover in one of the unfrequented galleries which divided the Infante's apartments from mine, and from what she afterwards told me, it would appear that her interview

with Don Cesar had been anything but satisfactory. "I cannot understand what has come over him," she said to me, when I tried to question her as to the particulars of their meeting; "ever since that fatal night at the Casa de Campo, he is a changed man. I do not say he has ceased to love me,—far from it—but yet, he seems to doubt my love for him, which he never did before. Do you think, madam, that he suspects me, as the King did once, of being in love with the Prince? Yet, if your Majesty recollects, it was *he* himself who suggested that deception to divert the King's suspicions, and cause him to forget the possibility of your Majesty's being concealed in the house at that moment."

"No, Blanche," I said, greatly moved by the poor girl's happy ignorance of the dreadful truth. "I am sure Don Cesar is the last person to doubt you, for he loves you dearly, ah, too dearly, perhaps! And as to that dreadful night at the Casa de Campo, which will never fade from my recollection, remember that both the Prince and I, and even the King himself, owe our honour, and perhaps our lives, to your generous and noble conduct; for God alone knows what Philip might have done if his jealousy had been aroused on that dreadful occasion."

"Your Majesty is too good to me, I only did what any other would have done in my place, what might have been expected of me, in fact;

and I pray you, madam, to forget it, as I would have forgotten it long ago, had not that catastrophe led to the discovery of my dear father, which has made me so happy ever since."

"You love the King then, very much, Blanche?"

"Do I love him? Is he not my father? And is he not to me the tenderest and most devoted of fathers? I should have no heart if I did not at least respond to the great love he shows towards me, with all the affection I can spare from my love for Cesar, who had full possession of my heart long before I learnt my father's existence. Yet it is strange that Cesar himself, who by this time should know me better, seems to doubt my love for the King, and constantly asks me what sort of affection I feel for him, and if I really believe in my heart that he is my father; as if I could doubt it for one single moment after all he has done for me—for me, a poor unknown girl, whom all despised and sneered at, before he declared me to be his own daughter, to the great surprise of the whole court."

I could not but shudder at the poor girl's words, which I believed came straight from her heart, as I knew her to be incapable of flattery or deception; for if she possessed much of the milk of human kindness, she had certainly none of its oil.

"Then," she went on after a pause, "he coolly

asks me if I love him like a brother or like a lover ! He pretends that my feelings for him when we first met in Paris must have been only those of a sister for a brother, and must have had their origin in my love for his mother. Now I consider this an insult. He says I was too young then to feel any other sort of love, and yet he does not deny that I inspired him with love, and that at the time he believed me to be in love with him ! These foolish thoughts never struck him before ; he loved me as I loved him, and we had full confidence in each other ; now, he trembles when I press his hand, and when I approach my lips to his, he shudders and recoils from me as if afraid of my touch ! Can this be real love ? Oh, madam, I dare say you think me very foolish in letting these things trouble me, and very presumptuous in telling them to your Majesty, but my heart is heavy, for I love Cesar more than ever, and it makes me unhappy to see that he should doubt my love ; and you, madam, are so kind and so patient with me, that the words escape my lips before I am aware of what I am saying."

"Do not fear to offend me, dearest Blanche, for you know I have always loved you like a sister, and now I have discovered that my husband is your father, I feel drawn toward you as towards a beloved daughter, so do not fear to open your gentle heart to me, and tell me all you feel both for the King and for Don Cesar."

“Oh! I do not love my father because he is the king, but because he is my father; but I dare say strangers think I only love him because he is a king. Oh! would to the Blessed Virgin that he were only a poor shepherd, and I the Queen of Spain, for then I could indeed prove to the whole world that my love for him is sincere, and such as a daughter's should be for the best of fathers. But,” added Blanche, her thoughts once more going back to the recollection of her last interview with her lover, which seemed to have had such an effect upon her—“when I say this to Cesar he turns pale and looks another way. Any one would think that he was sorry that my father should be a king, and that I am his daughter, instead of the unknown foreign girl I was when he first loved me—but that of course is impossible.”

“Perhaps,” I said, “he fears that His Majesty would not allow his daughter to marry a poor knight like himself.”

“Oh! as to that, I am not at all uneasy; he has often told me that he wants me to be the happiest woman in the whole extent of his dominions, and how can I possibly be happy if I am not Cesar's wife?”

There was such innocent decision in her words that they would have caused me to smile, had I been able to forget for one moment the dreadful secret that hung over her head, and which I

knew would sooner or later extinguish for ever all her hopes of happiness.

“And then,” she went on as if talking to herself, “how strange were his last words, what can they mean? Is he going mad?—Oh! poor fellow, and I accuse him of doubting my love for him!”

My curiosity was aroused. “Tell me, Blanche, what did he say when he left you?”

She did not require much pressing to tell me, for her heart was so full that she would have confided her troubles to the first sympathetic friend she might have found.

“When he took me in his arms to give me a parting kiss, as it has been his custom ever since we swore eternal love to one another, ever so long ago, at St Germain—he burst forth, exclaiming—‘Oh, I was mistaken, it is not the feeling of kindred love that stirs in me at thy sweet contact, my angel, my Blanche; it is that of love, of passion, which makes me almost mad, but mad with joy. Oh! thank God, thank God!’ Was it not strange of him to say that? At the time these words alarmed me, for I thought he was really going mad; but suddenly he pushed me back with such violence that I almost fell to the ground, and cursing God and uttering the most dreadful oaths, he left me more dead than alive.” And the poor girl burst into a flood of tears, which I had not the heart to

check, for I too felt my eyes moisten, so very affecting had been her story.

After that conversation with Blanche, I also began to conceive a hope, which soon took possession of my whole being, a hope that perhaps in spite of all we were mistaken in believing that poor girl to be the king's daughter. "Surely," I exclaimed, "God would not allow such a passion to exist between a brother and a sister! Oh! it would be too horrible!"

III.

“ Yes, wherever this nature of mine is most fair,
And its thoughts are purest—belov’d, thou art there.
And whatever is noblest in aught that I do,
Is done to exalt and to worship thee too.
The world gave thee not to me, no ! and the world
Cannot take thee away from me now ; I have furl’d
The wings of my spirit about thy bright head ;
At thy feet are my soul’s immortalities spread.
Thou mightest have been to me much ; thou art more,
And in silence I worship, in darkness adore.
If life be not that which without us we find—
Chance, accident merely—but rather the mind,
And the soul which, within us, surviveth these things,
If our real existence have truly its springs,
Less in that which we do than in that which we feel,
Not in vain do I worship, nor hopeless I kneel—
For then, though I name thee not mistress, or wife,
Thou art mine—and mine only—O ! life of my life ! ”

OWEN MEREDITH.

THE letter I had written to Don Carlos and which had given occasion to that interview between Blanche and Don Cesar, that had so agitated the former, was of a nature to require a prompt reply. This I received the next morning, and it forced me again to address a few lines to the prince. On the following day Don Cesar came to my apartments and requested an interview for the prince, his master. At first I hesitated, for I knew that any interview between us must

necessarily be a secret one, on account of the affair that prompted it ; but I was so sure of myself now, and I had such faith in the honour of Don Carlos ever since that meeting at the Casa de Campo, that I readily granted him the required interview, which took place in one of the usually deserted galleries, which, as I have already told you, ran between his apartments and mine, on the western side of the palace.

I can assure you that not one word of love passed between us on that occasion, however full our hearts might have been ; and that the sole object of our meeting in this secret manner was the transfer of a certain box of mine, until then in his possession, into my own hands ; but as ill luck would have it, the king had been informed by some officious courtier or other—one of those nonentities, I suppose, who do all the mischief at courts—that we were to meet in that gallery at a certain hour, and that our meeting was going to be one of a series ; so to our great dismay the grave solemn figure of Philip II. suddenly appeared between us ; and our confusion at thus beholding him so unexpectedly, was so great, that it almost excused the rage of jealousy into which he immediately burst.

He swore by all the saints in heaven that he would have his revenge, that both the Infante and *his mistress*, as he actually called me, would have to account to God for our crime ; and that

he would have nothing more to do with either of us.

The situation was most trying, for his anger was so great that neither of us could offer a word of explanation, and we both felt that appearances were quite against us; yet we were innocent—innocent even of thoughts in the least detrimental to the king's honour, and our own. But what could we do? how could we prove our innocence, or convince a jealous husband, blinded by rage and an overpowering sense of injury, that our meeting, though a secret one, had not been one of love? It is true, you might say, that I had in my hands the box which the prince had given me, and which might have told the truth for itself—but, Walter, that box contained papers which I would not have had the King of Spain see for worlds; papers which compromised the honour of one I dearly loved—no, I could not show him the box; and yet I knew that that box was the only proof we possessed of our innocence!

I cannot tell you whether Philip had entertained doubts as to my fidelity to him, or suspected my love towards his son until that day; most likely he had had his suspicions from the first, for he knew that the prince had once loved me, and then there were many persons around us whose interest it was to ruin their queen. Philip had been married now three times, why should he not give Spain a fourth queen? Those who had nothing could always

hope to gain something by a change, and I was anything but a favourite with his ministers, who dreaded my mother's influence too much to feel perfectly secure as long as I retained their master's heart; so perhaps—indeed most likely—his own doubts had been increased and fostered by those about him, until I had actually been accused of entertaining a criminal passion for the Prince of Asturias, the only likely person they could think of to suit their purpose.

When the first burst of rage was over, he ordered his son to be conducted to his apartments and to remain there to await his orders. As for me he was much more lenient, he himself begged me to return to my rooms; and when, later on in the afternoon, we had to appear together in public at the reception of a new ambassador, he treated me with the ceremonious cold and distant respect he usually adopted on such occasions, as if nothing had happened between us. But these marks of esteem, which I knew were only meant to save appearances, did not deceive me as to the future course events would take.

The next morning I awoke to find that my worst fears were realized; all my favourite maids-of-honour had been dismissed; some with one excuse, some with another. Blanche, the dearest to me by far, had been sent to a convent, where she was to remain until the time appointed for her marriage with the Duke de Feria. I suppose

the noble Duke thought my company too dangerous for the morals of his future wife ; yet my household, to all outward appearance, remained the same, for other maids-of-honour had been appointed to fill the vacant places, but for the most part these were old, and well-known for their rigid decorum ; but the higher personages of my household, such as the mistress of the robes, the hereditary grande maitresse de la cour, the Duchess de Olivares, the Princess d' Eboli and all the other grand ladies of my suit, whom I seldom saw, still remained the same.

Such was the beginning of the end.

IV.

“Be thou assured, if words be made of breath,
And breath of life, I have no life to breathe
What thou hast said to me.”

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN Don Cesar de Castro heard what had happened, and that Blanche had been sent away to a convent, he knew that the fatal crisis had come at last ; the time for thinking and planning was past, and only actions, the most prompt and desperate, could now save the prince.

Don Carlos must fly from Spain ; this was the only way he could now preserve his liberty, perhaps his life, and with this end in view he immediately despatched several of the gentlemen of his suite—choosing of course the most devoted to his interests—to different provinces of the kingdom, to borrow the necessary money for the voyage, for the prince’s revenues had been suddenly stopped by order of his Majesty.

Almost a whole year elapsed in these preparations, which, on account of their delicate nature required discretion and time ; a year, during which a second daughter was born to me (the first, the Infanta Clara Eugenia had been born in August 1566). My second daughter was christened, after

my royal mother, Catherine de Medicis, and received the name of Catalina.

Soon after her birth the king determined that there should be great feasts and rejoicings at his new palace of the Escorial to solemnise the happy event, and Don Carlos, to prevent suspicion, had determined to be present at their celebration ; he had, however, been particularly cautioned by Don Cesar and all his other friends, not to reveal his plans to anyone there ; they were now fast ripening, but could not be carried into effect until the return of Don Alvarez Osorio, who had gone to Seville to obtain the last loan which they required.

But the prince had suffered so much lately that he was hardly in his right senses, and one night, forgetting all the warnings of his friends, and deceived by the soft speeches of the greatest courtier of the age, he revealed the whole project of his intended flight to his uncle, Don Juan of Austria, who had just received the high appointment of admiral of all the Spanish fleets.

The Emperor's natural son listened to the Prince's projects with an attentive ear ; he sympathised with him, and assured him of his eternal friendship, which led the credulous Don Carlos to forget himself so far as to disclose to him all his plans, and even to ask him for his advice. Don Juan gave it as freely as it had been asked, and readily promised to assist him in effecting his escape. Three hours later he sought the King in

his bed-chamber, and revealed to his astonished Majesty the whole plot for his son's escape.

This happened about the beginning of the year 1568.

In the meantime Don Cesar, wishing once more to see his beloved Blanche before quitting Spain, perhaps for ever, had begged the King for permission to visit *his sister* in the convent, which Philip had readily granted, and of which he had taken an early advantage.

Blanche was enchanted to see him. "I knew you would come to see me—to take me away"—she said, when they met; "my heart told me so, I cannot remain here any longer, and you have come to liberate me, I knew you would."

"What do you mean, my sweet angel?"

"I mean," she answered in all the innocence of her heart, "that I am quite ready to accompany you now, wherever you choose to take me. You know how often you have asked me to fly with you and to become your wife in secret, in some distant corner of the earth, where no one will ever come between us; but I always feared to offend the King, who was so good to me, and to grieve my dear Queen, who has been more than my sister since your mother took me to Paris. Now I see that I must either conform to the King's wishes, and marry that hateful Duke de Feria, or run away with you, so I cannot hesitate any more. I am ready to go with you wherever you like to

take me. We shall be so happy together, ah ! so happy !”

Don Cesar, overcome by these words, fell on his knees before her, and in a passionate voice exclaimed—“ Blanche, Blanche, my own darling, I love you with all my heart !”

With one of those graceful and childish movements which had characterised her from childhood, the lovely girl laid her fair head against his, and allowed her unbound tresses to cover his face ; her cheek touched his, he could feel her warm breath upon his mouth, and his lips unconsciously sought hers.

“ I too love you, my Cesar,” she said, with irresistible earnestness. “ I too love you, and am ready to fly with you ; for I know I shall be always happy if I am by your side.”

He again pressed her to his breast, and for one moment he felt his reason vacillate under the impulse of passion ; but, with an almost superhuman effort, he conquered his feelings, with one bound he rose to his feet, and with a firm movement of that very hand which had so tenderly pressed her beloved form to his heart he now repelled her from him.

“ Leave me—leave me,” he cried, his voice betraying the most profound terror. And then, forgetting all at once his resolution of gently breaking to her the dreadful secret that divided them—a resolution which for the long space of

three years had prevented him from revealing the truth to her, fearing to inflict too great and sudden a shock that might prove fatal to her reason, perhaps to her life—he exclaimed, “Leave me, Blanche ; we are accursed by God—I am your brother !”

The bewildered Blanche failed to understand or to realise at first the full meaning of these dreadful words, their awful significance was beyond her, and still clinging to her lover she repeated :—

“Cesar, my darling, I love you, do you not hear me ? I love you—I love you !” Then her eyes met his, and surprised by the wild look in them, she exclaimed more dead than alive, “Good God, he is mad !”

It was some time before the poor lover could make her comprehend the dreadful truth, and when at last he succeeded in explaining to her that he also was the offspring of Philip II., her bewildered mind refused to take it in. At first she accused him of trying to deceive her in this way because he had ceased to love her, and wanted to get rid of her ; and when she saw how much her words pained him, and how sadly in earnest he was, she took his hand, and looking at him straight in the face as if she had wanted to read his very soul, she said in a firm voice that betrayed no fear, though perhaps a violent and unrestrained emotion :—

“No power on earth will make me believe that you are my brother. I will not say that you wish to deceive me when you call yourself a son of Philip II., or that the King lied when he declared *me* to be his daughter ; but I require proofs—proofs, for my heart refuses to believe this vile infamy ; and I shall love you to my dying day as a lover, not as a sister ; for I am certain I am not one. But if I were—good God spare me—spare me, for I should die.”

The spark of reliant hope which had until then lighted her beautiful eyes vanished all at once as the thought struck her of the possibility of his dreadful words being true. Her countenance fell—cold drops stood upon her pure white brow—her lips writhed as if in agony—her cheeks assumed a ghastly paleness, and there was a wildness in the fixed and feverish brightness of her eyes which appalled her poor lover ; the dreadful fear which had so long prevented him from revealing to her the horrible secret now returned in all its overwhelming intensity.

“No—no,” he cried, taking her hand once more in his, “No—no ; it cannot be. Great God, it would be too horrible—I will have proofs—I will clear the whole mystery, cost what it may ; for I can live no longer in this dreadful uncertainty !”

He supported himself as he said this with the utmost difficulty, and there was a gurgle in his throat, like the sound of the death-rattle.

"I too feel convinced," he went on when he could again speak, "I too feel convinced that you cannot be my sister, and yet we are both acknowledged to be the children of the same man!"

"Philip has never recognised you; no one in the whole court believes you are his son, why should you suspect it?"

"Alas, it is beyond suspicion! The King believes me to be his son, and has often told me as much, though, to save my mother's honour, he has sworn to her never to reveal this secret."

A hope seemed all at once to flash across Blanche's mind.

"Your mother!" she murmured, "Your mother! She has been almost a mother to me too; she has known me longer than any one else in the world; for she was present when I was brought to the convent door when an infant. Cesar, there is one way we can arrive at the bottom of this horrible mystery—perhaps the only one. Seek your mother, and ask her—she must know all—she will tell us the truth; for she will know that the happiness—nay, the life of her children, as she used to call us, depends upon it. Go to Bayonne, Cesar, you will find her there in the convent where we left her the unfortunate day we entered Spain; confess all to her, and return quickly to bring me her answer; for until she has confirmed this dreadful news I shall consider you my betrothed husband. Lose not a moment—start this very

night for the frontier—seek her—learn the whole truth from her lips, and return to the arms of your Blanche.”

“ My sister ! ”

“ No ; your wife—go.”

The brave girl would not say one word more, she would not even stay to say farewell to him ; but with a hurried step retired to her cell, where she knelt before the image of the Holy Mother of God, her beloved patroness, and remained for long hours lost in fervent prayer.

As for Don Cesar, the black cloud that had so oppressed and darkened that long day for him, now all at once dispersed, and descended in refreshing and revivifying dew, in the shape of thoughts he could not banish, hopes he had not dared to indulge in before.

Yet the great mystery was still unsolved, and he knew that most likely years would have to pass before he could seek his mother at Bayonne and ask her, and even then, perhaps, she was as ignorant on this all-important point as he was himself !

V.

“ Most dangerous
Is that temptation that does goad us on
To sin, in loving virtue.”

SHAKSPEARE.

THE crisis had come at last. Philip II., thunder-struck when he heard from the lips of his half-brother, the projects which had taken such deep root in his son's mind, arose from his couch, and without delay despatched his guard to the Prince's apartments with the order that they should bring him immediately to his presence.

Don Carlos had left the Escorial already, his apartments were found vacant.

The great King, who was not one to be easily baffled, at once decided what he would do. Horses were ordered, preparations hastened, and a few hours afterwards he was on his road to the capital.

I do not pretend to say that Don Cesar had acted wisely in inducing the Prince to fly from his country and his father, still less do I take upon myself to accuse Don Juan of Austria, the noble hero of Lepanto, of acting falsely, when he betrayed the secret of his nephew's intended flight to Philip. Perhaps it was his duty to do so, as a subject and as a brother, however

false his conduct might have been towards an over-confiding friend. Most likely they both were right from their different points of view. Don Cesar had tried to save his friend, Don Juan desired to save the honour of his family. I shall therefore accuse no one. However, I must confess that the desperate project of the flight of Don Carlos, though undoubtedly prompted by the best motives, had been, to say the least of it, a highly injudicious one, for it almost amounted to an acknowledgment of his guilt, and would have deprived him for ever of the crown of Spain ; but I must again repeat that the unfortunate Don Carlos had been innocent all the while, innocent even of planning this intended flight, and that his accursed fate was alone once more to blame for his misfortunes.

The King arrived in Madrid the next morning, and the first thing he did was to summon at once to his apartments some of the greatest theologians and statesmen, whom he knew to be at the time in the town—Gallo, the Bishop of Orihuela ; Cano, the Bishop of the Canary Islands ; Doctor Aypilcueta, the grand Inquisitor of Spain, and several others. To these he imparted his suspicions ; he told them of the intended flight of the Prince ; he spoke to them of his rebellious conduct during the last two years, and finished by imparting to them the scruples which until then had deterred him from taking any violent measures against him.

“I know Don Carlos to be a traitor,” he added, “a madman, unworthy of my pity ; a rebellious heretical youth, who will render Spain the most miserable of countries if he ever occupy its throne. Yet he is my flesh and blood—he is the last descendant of a long line of kings ; he is my son, my only son, and I love him !”

Every one was moved by these words in which they all saw the two natures of the man fighting for mastery over his soul. Yet their hearts were hardened, their dislike for the poor prince found at last a way to express itself openly, and these wise and learned men tried for several hours to impress upon the mind of the monarch, the necessity of inflicting the severest punishments upon the rebellious Prince. They pointed out to him the dangers to which his dynasty would be exposed, if the young heir to so many crowns were permitted to quit Spain unpunished ; they brought to his recollection, as an example, the perils which the French monarchy had run when the Dauphin Louis (afterwards Louis XI.) had revolted against his father, Charles VII., and taken refuge with the Court of Bourgogne, and they also enlarged greatly upon the innumerable dangers to which the true faith would be exposed if the future king of Spain, the Catholic country *par-excellence*, were permitted to join the party of the reformation, even though he should not actually adopt their horrible doctrines. As a father, as a king, and as a christian

they recommended his Majesty to punish the Prince with the strictest severity ; they entreated him on their knees not to spare the viper which had taken refuge in his royal breast, and which, when it had gained strength sufficient, would end by killing him ; and the great Inquisitor ended by saying that, if the King had not the courage to punish a rebellious, unworthy son, the Holy Office of the Inquisition would try him for heresy.

No one will ever know what Philip suffered at that time ; in vain did he try to believe his son innocent, everything seemed to point to an opposite conclusion. In vain did he try to soften the hearts of his stern advisers ; every one of them remained firm in his opinion. The cruel King, who had condemned thousands to be burnt and massacred, without giving so much as a second thought to the subject, could not bring himself to order the imprisonment of this miserable boy, though he was convinced of his dangerous sentiments, and believed him to be the seducer of his wife.

I told you the other night that Philip in his last existence had been Serena. I do not know, dear Walter, if you remember it ; perhaps you fail to understand how a woman could be reincarnated as a man, but, though it would take too long to explain all this to you again just now, yet I feel obliged to remind you of this circumstance, as it is the only way in which you will be able to account for

many of the feelings of this strange sovereign—feelings that were most contradictory at times, and which prompted some of his strangest actions.

On the 17th of January, the first night after the arrival of the king in Madrid, there was a reception in my apartments, which Don Carlos thought it necessary to attend, to prevent suspicion, for he was as yet ignorant of his uncle's treachery.

The following day was Sunday, and the king, accompanied by his son, Don Juan of Austria, and the rest of the Court, attended high mass in the royal chapel. The prince watched his father and his uncle all through the service, and thought he detected signs of mutual understanding between them. It was then that the suspicion of treachery, on the part of his uncle, first dawned upon him; and later in the afternoon, when Don Juan went to his apartments to gain more information respecting his intended flight, Don Carlos turned suddenly round, and fixing his eyes earnestly upon him, answered in a harsh voice, "Do not ask me any question; I shall tell you no more."

Don Juan was furious, his conscience told him how basely he had acted towards his friend, and allowing his anger to overcome him, he cried in a menacing voice, "Let your Highness beware!" and abruptly left the room.

The Infante, whose health had been very much

shaken lately, and who was suffering greatly at the time, retired soon afterwards to rest, but he had made a very poor use of his last day of freedom. The king was at this very moment giving his orders for the night.

VI.

“ Ilustre y alto mozo,
A quién el cielo dió tan corta vida,
Que apenas fué sentida ;
Fuistes breve gozo,
Y ahora luengo llanto de tu España,
De Flandes y Alemaña,
Italia, y de aquel mundo nuevo y rico
Con quien qualquier imperio es corto y chico.”

FRAY LUIS DE LEON.

THE night was cold and wintry, the snow kept falling thickly upon the steep roofs of the houses of Madrid, when, in a large and lofty chamber of the royal palace, Don Carlos of Austria, the hope of two worlds, and the heir to the most powerful throne in Christendom, lay upon his couch of suffering. Around him were seated upon large arm-chairs, embroidered with the lions of Leon, the castles of Castille, and the eagles of Austria, four of his gentlemen-in-waiting—the Count de Lerma, Don Fadrique Enriquez, Don Rodriguez de Mendoza, and Don Cesar de Castro. In the immense fireplace at the extreme end of the chamber was an enormous wood fire. The noise which these young nobles made with their laughter and loud talk, in order to cheer the spirits of the poor prince, prevented their hearing the approaching

steps of six men who now entered the apartment through a secret door concealed behind the folds of the rich tapestry which covered the walls.

These men were the Prince d' Eboli, the Duke de Feria, the Prior of Toledo, Don Luis Quijada, and Don Manrique de Lara ; the sixth was Philip II.

Their presence was unperceived until they were close to the bed on which Don Carlos lay, surrounded by his friends.

The effect of their sudden appearance was therefore as terrible as it was unexpected ; and the scene that ensued was as pathetic as a drama, as solemn as the execution of a divine decree.

Don Carlos, startled at the sight of his father's cold, severe countenance—for Philip II. had at last made up his mind, and was now resolute—threw himself from the bed, crying, “What does your Majesty require—my liberty or my life?”

“Neither one nor the other,” answered the king with surprising self-possession, yet with a marked softness in his tone of voice.

The poor Prince, thinking that the end had come at last, threw himself at the king's feet, and asked him to kill him then and there. “There is one favour which I still dare to ask of your Majesty—that is, that I should die by your royal hand.”

Philip lifted the enfeebled body of his unfortunate son, and gave him into the arms of the Prince

d' Eboli and the Duke de Feria, who had stood immediately behind him all this time.

"Fear nothing, Carlos," he said, apparently much moved, "I am your father still, and what I do is for your good." Then he turned to the other gentlemen who had accompanied him, and gave orders that his Highness's papers and books should be searched. He also commanded that all arms should be taken away from the rooms he was in future to inhabit. These were close by, and had been comprised for some time in the suite of apartments destined for his accommodation in the palace.

In the meantime, Don Carlos, partially recovering his senses, and now thoroughly impressed with the danger of the situation, managed to glide unperceived by the two men to whom the king had entrusted him, and to approach his friend Don Cesar de Castro, who had remained all this time in silent amazement near the arm-chair in which he had been seated when Philip had made his sudden appearance, and quietly and cautiously slipped into his hands a small packet which until that moment had never left his bosom. It contained my last letters to him. This action both of them believed to have passed unperceived by all present, as they were at that moment busily occupied in searching the apartment.

When the papers and jewels of the Prince had been given to the Prince d' Eboli, who was to

convey them to the King's apartments for his inspection, Philip II. intrusted the care of his son's person to the Duke de Feria, whose orders he commanded all the Infante's household to obey in future. He then waved his hand, and Don Carlos was conveyed without any further resistance on his part to that portion of his apartments which was from that day to be his prison.

The Prince of Spain was a prisoner of State in his father's palace.

VII.

Es nuestra vida borrascosa lucha
De bien y mal, de gozo y de dolor ;
El mas feliz en su interior escucha
El eco de un afan devorador.

WHEN all had left the sleeping chamber, with the exception of Don Cesar, who remained alone with the king, the latter turned to him, and in a commanding tone ordered him to give him the papers he had just received from the Prince.

Don Cesar was stunned, and Philip II. had to repeat the order before he could bring himself to answer it in negative, yet respectful terms.

"They are not mine, Sire. His Highness has entrusted them to me, I must keep them for him."

A movement of impatience passed across the severe features of the monarch.

"What nonsense is this, Don Cesar! It is Philip of Austria, thy king, who commands thee to give him those papers, it is for thee to obey."

"Sire, I dare not: for all the gold of Peru I would not betray my master's trust," was the courageous answer.

"Ah!" burst forth the king, his impatience and anxiety now taking full possession of him and betraying themselves in the tremour of his lips.

"So you confess that there are things in those papers which would condemn the Prince!"

"I assure your Majesty that I completely ignore what is contained in these papers."

"I can hardly believe you ; you know as well as I do that those papers which you would hide from me are letters from the Queen—from my wife—letters that would prove her guilt."

"Sire !"

"As an injured husband I have a right to see those letters—as a king I command you to give them up—as a father, I entreat you to let me see them."

The tone of his voice, which until then had been cold and severe, now changed all at once into that of soft entreaty, which made the faithful Don Cesar tremble with astonishment, so foreign did it seem to Philip's usual manner.

"Sire, I cannot. Let your Majesty command me in aught else, I would obey you without a moment's hesitation—take my life, Sire, it is at your disposal—but these papers do not belong to me."

"Cesar . . . Cesar," cried the king, in accents broken by half-suppressed sobs. "It is I who ask to see those letters. I, your father . . . that beg—yes, beg of you to let him see the papers you hold in your hand."

"Sire !"

"No, Cesar, at this solemn moment I am not

the king—the severe, stern, all-powerful monarch of Spain is gone—it is Philip, the broken-hearted father—Philip, the injured husband, that begs of you to give him up those letters—the only proofs perhaps of his son's self-deception—of his wife's innocence! Cesar, can you see me suffer as I do, and remain unmoved; behold me at thy feet; yes, behold all the pride of Austria at thy feet; the sovereign of two worlds humbly begging for a scrap of paper . . . a mere scrap of paper . . . which is more valuable to him than all the kingdoms of the earth."

And the great King flung himself on his knees before Don Cesar, while unrestrained tears flowed freely down his haggard, hollow cheeks. One could see that the struggle within him had been most desperate; and the sight which he presented, prostrated on the ground, would have softened the heart of his bitterest enemies.

Yes, no one has been more belied, or so badly understood as Philip II. of Spain; particularly in England, where, as the husband of poor Mary Tudor, the weakest and most maligned of queens, for a few years they had occasion to witness some of his bad qualities, while at the same time they were unable to comprehend his great genius, that soared over the smallness of common events, like the eagle, his appropriate crest; deigning only to alight upon the highest peaks, where the steps of common men could never hope to reach.

Don Cesar was almost as much moved as the king, and was obliged to turn his eyes from the imploring face before him, in a moment of human pity, fearing to be unfaithful to his friend's trust.

"I would gladly give my life for your Majesty but I cannot betray my friend;" he said, with a determination which Philip knew would be unalterable. The lips, which for one moment had reflected a smile—a horrible smile to behold—were now more firmly set than ever, the tears dried suddenly at their source; he rose, and walking a few steps backward, took a pistol from his waist-band, cocked it, and pointing it deliberately at Don Cesar, he cried in a hollow voice :—

"I have waited too long already; had it been any one else he would have been lying dead on that hearthstone long ere this; but you are the only son now left to me, yet you will die, die at my hands; the peace of my heart, the happiness of Spain require it For the last time, Don Cesar, give me those papers of your own accord, or I shall take them from your corpse!"

The brave young man hesitated one moment more, he looked at the menacing form of his father, then cast a wandering look of mute dismay round the apartment; as he did so, his eyes caught sight of the immense fire which

burnt in the enormous fire-place not very far from him.

“Take my life, Sire,” he exclaimed. “You gave it to me, your own hands shall take it from me . . . but these papers you shall never touch.” And he threw them into the roaring flames.

Philip uttered a cry of despair,—a cry such as a lioness utters whose cubs have been taken from her,—his lips quivered with anger, his whole frame shook with rage,—with one spring he reached the fire-place, and his wild gaze searched in vain for the papers, which the fire had now almost entirely consumed. As he did this, the draught of the ancient chimney caused a small particle, only half burnt, to rise in the air and fall at his feet, he seized it with both hands and looked eagerly at it ; it was, however, too small to contain many words, but it was sufficient for him to recognise his wife’s hand-writing.

Again a cry of despair escaped from his heart, and his eyes, with an involuntary movement, sought the upper part of the fire-place, where the proud motto of his father was carved in red letters—

NON PLUS ULTRA,

and he fell half-senseless into the arm-chair nearest to him, for he knew that henceforward he could know nothing further.

For some minutes he remained there motion-

less—to all appearance lifeless—stunned with grief—then, as he gradually recovered his consciousness, a few incoherent sentences escaped his trembling lips . . .

“My God . . . my God . . . all is true . . . too true . . . my son . . . my wife . . . Ah!”

“Father . . . father,” exclaimed the now overcome and awe-stricken Don Cesar, approaching him, “I assure you, you are labouring under a dreadful mistake . . . the Queen is innocent . . . Oh! I swear it on my salvation . . . Elisabeth de Valois is innocent!”

“The proof . . the proof, there it lies in cinders, and you ask me to believe you now . . . now, when it is too late! Oh leave me, leave me, Cesar . . . it is too horrible! What have I done, my God, to deserve this horrible punishment! . . . Ah, why, oh why was I ever born to try and render others happy, and to remain myself the most miserable man in Christendom! Work and toil . . . Oh, king! pass thy nights in sleepless watchfulness, thy days in the battle-field; kill; massacre; destroy; damn thine own soul to preserve an imperial crown for thy son and thy wife . . . and all the while thy son and thy wife are conspiring against thee . . . thy wife is not thine . . . thy son is a worthless impious traitor . . . and thy child—that dear angel—the joy . . . the dream of thy latter years, thine innocent beloved Catalina, is not thine . . . she is the

child of another . . . thy heart has lied . . . nature has lied . . . heaven has lied . . . the daughter thou believedst thy child is not thine . . . the daughter of thy son ! Ah ! all, all is false in this world . . . all is false, there is only truth, ah ! and horrible truth, in my misery ! ”

Have you ever seen a man’s grief—a strong, stern man’s grief ? Ah ! God preserve you from it, it is too dreadful to behold. Cesar was aghast even to speechlessness when the king fixed his piercing eyes upon him, and said—

“ And you—you complete my anguish by destroying the only proof I could have produced of their guilt ; you finish by even robbing me of my revenge, the only thing that was left to me.”

“ And if her Majesty were innocent ? If Don Carlos were innocent ? ”

“ Prove it and I will believe you, until then I will leave Madrid ; I cannot remain any longer under the roof that harbours my adulterous wife and her miserable lover. You will tell that woman that I have gone . . . that I do not ask for a separation—that I do not expose her guilt, because the proofs of it have been vilely destroyed . . . destroyed by *you*. But that I no longer consider her my wife . . . As for her child . . . I shall not dispute it . . . it is hers . . . not mine ; and I shall permit it still to bear the title of Infanta of Spain, because it belongs to her through her father the Prince of Spain. . . . ”

“ Oh, Sire ! how can you doubt that the Infanta Catalina is your daughter ? do you not see reflected upon every feature of that baby face the unmistakable characteristics of your royal race ? ”

“ Does the child indeed possess the features of the house of Austria ? But even if she did, these features, are they not also *his* ? ”

“ Oh ! ”

“ As for *him*, he shall die, proofs will not be wanting of his treason and his heresy, for not all the fire of hell could consume *them*. To-morrow, at the break of day, I shall convoke the Supreme Council of Castille and the highest tribunal of the Holy Inquisition,—the accusation shall be drawn out against him before twelve hours are over. . . . Don Cesar, you too will hear from me ere long ; and remember, that now I have no sons left to me. I stand alone . . . I am alone upon the throne, and the world shall tremble at my feet.”

With a proud step he quitted the sleeping-chamber without casting so much as a passing glance upon his natural son. Who could ever have imagined that this stern, severe man had only a quarter of an hour before knelt humbly at that young man's feet, imploring of him to allow him to see those pieces of almost worn-out paper !

VIII.

"In mea vesanas habui dispendia vires,
Et valui pœnas fortis in ipse meas."

OVID.

EARLY on the morrow Don Cesar came to my apartments to bring me the sad news of the arrest of Don Carlos. He did not take me by surprise; for I, as well as the whole of the Court, had been expecting something of this kind to happen for some time past. I was therefore well prepared for the realisation of this desperate measure, which I knew the Prince's powerful enemies would not rest till they had sooner or later forced the King to carry into execution; but the afflicting details of it moved me much, for I could not but feel for the poor Prince, whom I knew to be all the while the innocent victim of the vilest of plots.

"The king is also furious with your Majesty," he added, when he had minutely described all the particulars of the Infante's arrest. "He believes you, madam, to be deeply involved in Don Carlos' affairs—to have conspired with him. . . . He is convinced that there have been clandestine meetings between you, and he expressed himself in language, which I must confess to you, madam,

grieved me greatly . . . particularly as I could not undeceive him."

I was greatly agitated when I heard this. "Tell me all," I said. "I must know all, I can bear it . . . indeed I can. I command you to speak; oh, anything is better than this suspense."

"Well, if your Majesty commands me to tell her all, I hope she will do me the justice to remember that I do not believe for an instant the truth of what in a moment of anger and jealousy he allowed himself to utter against you, madam, in my presence."

"Oh, speak, speak!"

"He said that he believed your Majesty guilty of loving the Prince of the Asturias, but that he would not expose your crime, or seek a formal separation because he possessed no proofs of it."

"Ah!"

"That he would allow your Majesty to keep the Infanta Catalina . . . because as she was not his daughter, he had no rights over her."

"He said that?"

"He did indeed, madam!"

"That my child is not his? That his daughter is not his daughter? Ah! whose child does he suppose her to be then . . . ?"

"The Prince of Spain's."

"Ah!"

"This is what he believes, madam, and your

recent interviews with the Prince, one of which unfortunately took place about nine months before your daughter's birth, . . . your letters to him, . . . everything seems apparently to justify him in forming this dreadful conclusion ; but I need not tell your Majesty that, for my part, I do not believe a single word of it, and am firmly convinced on the contrary, that both my poor friend and your Majesty are innocent, . . . but is there no way of proving this ? . . . does your Majesty possess no proofs of her innocence ? a few papers, something that could prove that those secret meetings between you were not prompted by love, anything that could account satisfactorily for them in another way ?”

“ Those meetings between us ? Ah ! if we have indeed come to this I shall not mind exposing their nature to the whole of Europe. . . . My happiness, the future prospects of my daughter will force me to speak, though I had promised never to reveal the secret that occasioned them. Know, then, that my Mother, the Queen Regent of France, was at the time in secret correspondence with me on affairs of state. I had always refused to answer her continued questions respecting the political intentions of my husband's cabinet, and we had not been, therefore, on the best of terms for some time, when one day I received private intelligence from the French ambassador that Catherine de Medicis had despatched from Paris a

box, containing papers of the greatest importance to France, directed to me. In vain I waited for the arrival of this box, which I knew Philip would have given much to intercept. Weeks passed, months passed, the box never arrived, and my anxiety knew no bounds; when one day I discovered that by the merest chance the officer despatched by the King to take possession of it—for it seems he knew of its existence from the first—was a devoted friend of Don Carlos, and before bringing the box to his Majesty he showed it to the Prince. He, knowing at once how miserable this discovery would make me, and how greatly it would injure my interests, conceived the generous plan of restoring it to me, inducing the officer who had brought it, to pretend it had never entered Spain at all. The young officer lent himself readily enough to this deception, for he feared to offend his future king; and Don Carlos informed me that he had possession of the box and that he would give it only into my hands; I then wrote to him a letter which he answered, and then a second one to arrange the only secret interview we have had since that fatal night at the Casa de Campo. Now you know all. I would never have talked of this affair, for you see that my mother's honour, and even the fortunes of my dear native country are involved in it, but if matters are indeed so serious, if my innocence is doubted, if the legitimacy of my child is questioned,

I will confess all to the King ; no scruple shall now detain me."

"Are there no written proofs of what your Majesty has been good enough to explain? Could your Majesty produce any document written at the time, that would at once establish the truth of what you have told me respecting the secret transfer of this box ?"

I tried to collect my thoughts; for the dreadful things I had heard had so stunned me as almost to deprive me of my reason, and I felt my mind paralysed.

"Yes," I answered, after a few moments' reflection, "there exist the letters I wrote to the Prince on that occasion. I carefully burnt *his*, fearing any one should find them amongst my other papers, but he may have preserved mine; indeed I feel sure he has them still in his possession."

I felt myself blush as I said this, yet I cared not what I should be obliged to confess, provided the truth could at last be made known. "Let him produce these letters, they will explain all—they alone can save us."

I heard Don Cesar utter an exclamation of despair, and I turned towards him. I saw him standing there in the middle of the room as white as a statue, and as motionless, a perfect picture of mute despair. I can see him yet. I approached him, took his hand in mine, and asked what was the matter. It was some time before he could speak ;

at last he exclaimed in accents that froze the very marrow in my bones.

“Those letters!”

“Yes, what of them?”

“I had them in my hands . . . the Prince at the last moment gave them to me to take care of, fearing that some one would discover them upon his person. I held them in my hands, when the king ordered me to give them to him, . . . and I, not knowing their contents, . . . their importance in proving his innocence and yours, I threw them on the flames and consumed them!”

I heard no more ; what afterwards passed comes back to my memory like the wild incoherent recollections of a horrible nightmare. I had fainted.

RETURN TO THE HAVANA.

I.

“Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse—but to weigh and consider.”
BACON.

THE morning after the last night I have recorded in these pages I was sitting in an easy rocking-chair on the open verandah of my little house, at Guanabacoa, where I had been a fortnight, leisurely smoking my cigar, and occasionally sipping the delightful coffee contained in a tiny little china cup on the table by my side.

People may say that one cup of coffee is like any other cup of coffee, but it is quite as much a mistake, as to say that one horse is as good as another; for there is coffee, and coffee, and a thousand ways of making it and of spoiling it too. Some may like the Mocha best, but I prefer the Cuban; and as I sat that spring morning rocking gently to and fro in the verandah, dreaming of Conchita and of our past, and inwardly thanking God that the sixteenth century with all its terrors had passed away; while my eyes wan-

dered over the beautiful landscape spread out before me under that matchless tropical sky, I had very good reasons for considering myself the happiest of men.

One of my favourite books, Sir Humphrey Davy's "Consolations in Travel," lay on my knee, and between the "sips" of coffee and the "puffs" of smoke, I read now and then a few sentences.

"We sometimes in sleep, lose the beginning and the end of a dream, and recollect the middle of it; and one dream has no connection with another, and yet we are conscious of an infinite variety of dreams; and there is a strong analogy for believing in an infinity of past existences, which must have had connection with each other, and human life may be regarded as a type of infinite and immortal life; and its successions of sleep and dreams as a type of the changes of death and birth to which, from its nature, it is liable."

Here a puff at my cigar. "How truly the great philosopher wrote," I thought, while I puffed again. "How true, and yet—could he have had anything more than a mere idea of that great mystery of existence—re-incarnation? Is it possible that he could have reasoned thus about it, and yet have ignored it as a fact? Perhaps he too held converse with the spirits of the dead? Who knows?" Then I went on reading again.

"That the ideas belonging to the mind were ori-

ginally gained from those classes of sensations called organs, it is impossible to deny, as it is impossible to deny that mathematical truths depend upon the signs which express them ;” (here a sip at the coffee), “but these signs are not themselves the truths, nor are the organs the mind :” (another sip at the coffee which was too delicious to resist). “The whole history of intellect is a history of change according to a certain law, and we retain the memory only of those changes which may be useful to us ; the child forgets what happened to it in the womb ; the recollections of the infant likewise, before two years, are soon lost ; yet many of the habits acquired in that age are retained through life,” (here another puff at the cigar). “The sentient principle gains thought by material instruments, and its sensations change as those instruments change : and, in old age, the mind, as it were, falls asleep to awake to a new existence. With its present organisation, the intellect of man is naturally limited and imperfect, but this depends upon its material machinery ; and in a higher organised form it may be imagined to possess infinitely higher powers.” (Another sip at the coffee.—Decidedly, good Sir Humphrey must have had communications from another world). “Were man to be immortal with his present corporeal frame, this immortality would only belong to the machinery ; and with respect to acquisitions of mind, he would virtually die every two or

three hundred years, that is to say, a certain quantity of ideas only could be remembered, and the supposed immortal being would be, with respect to what had happened a thousand years ago, as the adult now is with respect to what happened in the first years of his life."

Here my cigar went out, and I struck a match to light it again. But as in Cuba, unfortunately, there are no vesuvians, all the matches being of the kind known as "wax vestas," (by the bye why should they be called vestas?) and there being a strong breeze from the sea, this operation was rather a difficult one; match after match I struck, and match after match went out. In this dilemma I was just going to get up from my comfortable rocking-chair, and go into the house to try and relight my cigar indoors, when who should I see standing before me but Mr Horatio Ulysses Talboys, with his hair brushed up higher than ever, and his eyes even more watery than usual, but with the eternal white tropical suit and the large panama hat he had worn on board the "City of Havana."

"*Jesus Maria, y José!*" I exclaimed, "I am in for it," and I looked down, as if I had not seen him, and pretended to go on reading my book, but no—nothing could save me, the clever young man recognised me in a moment.

"Lord Carlton!" he said, coming towards me, "by all the Mutheth, *you* here! Tho glad to

thee you, by Jupiter, tho glad !” I was obliged to look up, and to give him my hand, which he squeezed till he made me blink, and resign myself to his “agreeable” society.

For one mortal hour he remained there, rocking away in front of me, speaking of his “heart,” and of his “thoul,” and of his “poetry,” and of his “love affairth,” and puffing away at four cigars of mine, one after the other. No—he would not go, nothing on earth would induce him to go, though he was in such a desperate hurry, as he kept saying every five minutes !

If there is a thing I hate in the world, it is having to entertain people, or “doing the honours.” Why should we be obliged to sacrifice everything, to give up our business or our pleasure, and sit down for a whole hour with some man whom we don’t know, and don’t care for ; talking about the weather, and the health of a third person whom neither of us care a pin about ; and asking a thousand foolish questions to pass the time, merely because “a friend” who has nothing whatever to do, and feels equally bored everywhere, chooses to come and pay you a visit. “Poor old fellow, he must be so lonely at home all alone, you know !” But if one lives in the world, I suppose one is obliged to put up with these things. What would society say if you told the first “friend” who came to take up your time, “Please go away, there is a good fellow, I do not want your society?”

After we had exhausted every possible topic of conversation, and had put to each other at least three times the same questions, he suddenly—for Mr Talboys did everything by impulse—got up, and, standing just in front of me, while his eyes rolled in every imaginable direction, he exclaimed—

“I am the motht mitherable man alive.”

“Really now,” I thought, “you don’t say so, I am sure you don’t look it,” but of course I said nothing, and went on puffing away, and wondering what was coming. “Perhaps he is going to ask me to lend him some money,—very likely, after taking my time, he won’t feel any scruples in taking my money. He is a ‘genius,’ and who ever heard of a ‘genius’ who could keep within limits? Yes, that is it, he is going to ask me for money.” But no—the exclamation which followed was one of quite a different kind, but mysterious and romantic as one would have expected from this Byronic Yankee.

“Mith de Fithon ith going away!”

I could not help drawing a deep sigh of relief. He was not going to ask me to lend him any money,—he only wanted my sympathy—and this I gave him ungrudgingly.

“Is she indeed?”

“Yeth, the ith going away by the theamer to-morrow, going back to New York. When the told me thithe dreadful newth I felt . . . well, I don’t

know how. I felt it all over me ; from the crown of my head to the tholeth of my feet. I did indeed, though you look ath though you doubted it."

"Oh, I don't doubt it . . . not for one moment. But why don't you go with her?"

"Ah, there it ith! I have buthineth in thith island—buthineth, you know, which I cannot put off. The knowth it too, the heartleth girl. Ah, it ith hard to have thuth a heart as I have, when one cannot thacrifith everything to it. There ith Mr Alexith, and Thmith, they have no buthineth, but to them a heart thuch ath mine ith denied. *They* are going with her. *They* won't leave her. *They* are alwayth with her. Oh, I am the moth mitherable man alive!"

"But why is she going away?"

"Ah, the heartleth "coquette! Entre nous, Lord Carlton, the ith unworthy of my love. You won't believe me when I tell you that the ith going away only becauth that thupid youngther the Duke de Miranda ith going to marry her rival. The hath been thetting her cap at him all thith time, and I . . . I, innothent that I wath . . . for I am all heart ath you know . . . I believed her incapable of thuch a thing. Ah, it ith dreadful to have thuch a thoul!"

"But the Duke's marriage is nothing new, why, everybody knew all about it before I left the town."

"Ah, you are thinking of the marriage of the

Duke with Mith Muñoth. Ah, that hath been broken off, he ith going now to marry Lady Leigh, the pretty American widow, thopping at the Than-Carloth."

I started to my feet, looked at him in speechless astonishment, and dropped back into my rocking-chair.

"Going to marry Lady Leigh!"

"Yeth," he answered, in the low absent tone of a man whose mind is secretly pursuing its own train of thought; "and the hath taken offenth at that, the heartleth coquette; the preferred the ignorant Duke to me, who am all heart, who loved her tho . . . and the ith going—going for ever. Ah! I am the moth mitherable man alive!"

"Oh, damn Miss de Fison," I burst out uncere-
moniously. "Do tell me all you know about Lady Leigh."

Mr Talboys shook his wise head, as if he pitied me for not comprehending the depths of his heart, and answered—

"I can tell you nothing; I am broken-hearted; I can think of nothing but my love, my loht, loht love. But Lady Leigh (another heartleth woman) ith going to marry the Duke; everybody knowth that, and Mith de Fithon ith going . . . going away!"

Without saying good-bye, without indeed another word, Mr Talboys took a fifth cigar from the box I had left on the table, beside the now

empty cup of coffee, and turning on his heel, he left me alone on the verandah.

“Can this be possible!” I exclaimed. “Is Lilian really going to marry the Duke after all! I can hardly realise it, but I must make sure. I will go to town this very afternoon and find out for myself if what that fool has been telling me is true or not.”

There was a train starting half-an-hour after that, so throwing Sir Humphrey’s book on one side, I got ready, and was at the station long before the train came up. On arriving at Regla, which was as far as the rail could take me, I got on board one of the ferry steamers, and crossed the bay. Once in the town I called one of the innumerable victorias which are to be seen at every corner, and told the man to drive me straight to the Hotel San Carlos.

“Is Mrs Herbert at home?” I enquired of the well-known porter who was busily making his eternal cigarettes.

“Si, Señor,” he answered, laying a strong emphasis on the *Si*. In a moment I was up the marble staircase, in the large corridor, knocking at the Consul’s door.

II.

"People must be taken as they are, and we neither make them or ourselves better, by flying from, or quarrelling with them."—

BURKE.

"You were quite right, Lord Carlton; Lilian Leigh *was* making up to the Duke de Miranda, and she has won the day, for their engagement has been formally announced by the handsome Duchess herself, who, strange to say, appears most pleased with it. But this only proves to you once more how little I know about what is going on around me; it now turns out that everybody was aware of this from the first; and I alone, I who lived in the same house with Lilian, ignored it."

"So much for the delicate perception of a woman; so much for the wonderful tact which you call the peculiar gift of your sex!"

"Pray, Lord Carlton, do not take me for the standard of my sex; I do not pretend to know the world's affairs."

"And yet you did not hesitate to accuse me of entertaining a vehement passion for Lilian Leigh!"

"I beg your pardon, it was not *I* who accused you, it was the world."

"You are a regular Mrs Candour!"

“Lord Carlton !”

“Well, well, forgive me ; it will all come right in the end, in spite of the world !”

“If you go on in that way, you will compel me to believe you—in spite of all my determination to the contrary—in love with Lilian Leigh, and jealous of the Duke”

“Then I say no more. I am going to sleep here to-night, Mrs Herbert ; my servant will arrive some time in the afternoon with my baggage, but I shall not remain long in the island ; I leave by the first steamer for England.”

“I am sorry to hear this, for in spite of your extraordinary ways, you are most popular with us all ; somehow or other, you have managed to steal to our hearts, and we shall miss you very much indeed, if you go away.”

“Exceedingly kind of you to say so, but, of course, I may believe you or not as I like. Good-bye.”

“You are incorrigible, Lord Carlton, but I hope to see you again to-night, nevertheless. Good-bye.”

On leaving Mrs Herbert's rooms, I enquired if Lady Leigh was in the hotel. “I must see her once more, I said. I have nothing to fear now, she is engaged to another.” No—she had gone out in her volante to the Quinta of the Duchess, at the Cerro. My mind was made up in a moment—I would drive there and see her.

I called another victoria, and told the driver to take me to the Cerro.

The Cerro, as I have already stated, is a suburb of the Havana, and the favoured locality of the country houses and summer villas. There is a railway to it, and also tramways which take you there in a very short time, the distance being under two miles ; in fact I never could make out precisely where the city ends and the Cerro begins, for there are houses all the way.

Once in the Cerro, however, the shops cease, and the garden railings and walls of private gardens take their place on either side of the long road.

As I drove from the town, passing smoothly along the tram rails which run the whole length of the Cerro, and driving under the feather-like branches of the palm trees which line the way, my mind began to recover its balance, and I began to see how rudely I had behaved to Mrs Herbert. "I really must control myself," I thought ; "what will she think of me if I fly like that into a passion at the smallest provocation. It is true that it is most provoking to be misunderstood by every one, and to have all one's actions misinterpreted by the world ; but yet, it is my own fault if I am 'so extraordinary,' as Mrs Herbert seems to think me. The nightly intercourse I hold with my darling Conchita is the cause of it, the feeling that she is always

beside me renders me crazy. She is right ; in this life we should not let the thoughts and events of another world influence us too much. In future, I will try to become more like my former self."

We had now arrived at the lodge of the Quinta, and the driver had descended from his box to ring the bell. A black man in livery opened the immense iron gates, which were surmounted on either side with large gilt ducal coronets, and we entered the avenue.

The grounds round the house were not very extensive, but they were most beautifully laid out, and decorated with statues and fountains which displayed much taste. Large ceiba trees gave a pleasant shade over the more covered walks, orange trees displayed their golden fruit, and bananas waved their fan-like branches in all directions ; while hundreds of wondrous flowers and exotics, such as we never see out of conservatories, even in Southern Europe, were here planted in gorgeous profusion. The ever-graceful palms rose high above the whole, and in their extreme beauty, seemed literally painted upon the turquoise sky.

After seeing this lovely place, no one could be astonished that the handsome Duchess had preferred it to the grim towers of her husband's ancestral castle by the banks of the Ebro, or even to the brilliant saloons of Madrid and Paris.

I described the house the night of the ball which celebrated the Duke's return, so I need not give a lengthy account of it now, especially as this day I was not to see much of the interior of it.

The slave who opened the door for me conducted me to the picture gallery which, as I have before stated, opened out of the hall; here I was met by Doña Eduarda.

Doña Eduarda was a single lady of sixty, who had refused the most eligible offers out of pure love for the Duchess—as she took very good care to let every one know—and who endeavoured to conceal the ravages of time under the affectation and airs of excessive youthfulness. I need scarcely add that she was one of the numerous lady companions who formed the little court of the Duchess de Miranda.

“Lord Carlton!” she said, “I thought you were at Guanabacoa?”

“Yes, but I have come back, and I hasten to pay my respects to the Duchess and to yourself, Doña Eduarda.”

“Thank you for the compliment, Lord Carlton; believe me that I return it as it is meant. As for the Duchess! Ah, the dear Niña has been sadly misled since you went away. You have heard of this deplorable marriage?”

“Yes.”

“Who would have thought of such a thing!

We have all been sadly deceived in that American adventuress !”

“Doña Eduarda !” I exclaimed, surprised.

“Ah ! perhaps you are a friend of hers. I am not—I love the Duchess too dearly, believe me, ever to forgive her ; after what has happened I can call her nothing but an adventuress.”

“Does not the Duchess approve of her son’s marriage ?”

“Ah ! there it is, she has been blindfolded, deceived, vilely deceived, and she herself has actually broken the engagement with Doña Filomena. Ah, Lord Carlton, who would ever have thought that it would come to this ?—who would ever have thought that the heir of the princely house of Miranda del Ebro would end by marrying an American adventuress ? *Jesus, Maria y José !* I shall go mad if I think of it too much—I, who loved the Duchess so well,—I, who have sacrificed my future to her,—I, who have the family interest so much at heart ! see the way I am treated ; she won’t even listen to me—*Jesus !* she won’t listen to reason. But I always predicted that no good would come of an English education. Forgive me for saying so, the English are so democratic, so republican, so . . . present company excepted, Lord Carlton, present company excepted,” and the good old lady began to fan herself desperately.

“Shall I see the Duchess ?” I ventured to ask, when my friend had cooled herself a little.

“ Oh, yes ! any one can see her ; she will listen to any stranger rather than to me—than to *me*, who have played with her when she was a child,—than to *me*, who have refused the most eligible offers out of love for her. Yes, *you* may see her—you will find her in the garden—I won’t go near her ; no, not for all the saints in heaven.”

As she was speaking, another lady entered the gallery,—Doña Eulalia—the lady companion who had accompanied the Duchess to the Ingenio of the Count de Guanabacoa.

“ You have heard the news ? ” were her first words.

“ Yes.”

“ Your opinion ? ”

I was too startled by the question to answer ; but Doña Eduarda saved me the trouble, by saying :—

“ He takes the American’s side ! ”

Doña Eulalia looked at me from head to foot in mute contempt.

“ He prefers the Robinson’s to the Muñoz de Castro’s—Maria Santisima ! ”

And the old lady crossed herself devoutly. One would have thought I had been a demon whose evil presence it was necessary to counteract with the sign of salvation.

“ He wants to see the Niña,” went on Doña Eduarda, “ will you take him to her ? I will not see her until she changes her mind and firmly

refuses her consent to this degrading marriage."

Doña Eulalia cast on Doña Eduarda a look to be remembered but not to be described.

"*Doña Eduarda!*" she said in a measured tone, laying a strong emphasis on every word, "*Doña Eduarda—do you take me for a slave?*"

I shuddered as I heard this. I knew too well what was coming, and the idea of the two old ladies quarrelling, turned my very blood cold; I had had quite enough of it the night of the opera. I was wondering how I should escape, when fortunately the steward of the household, a very gentlemanly Spaniard, now made his appearance, and informed me that the Duchess had heard of my arrival, and was waiting for me in the garden. Too glad to escape the quarrel, of which I was the innocent cause, I hurried out of the picture gallery followed by the Spaniard. As I crossed the threshold of the great door, I turned back to bow to the ladies, when I saw, to my surprise, that they also were leaving the gallery by opposite doors, but not before bestowing one more angry look at one another.

I found the handsome Duchess in the garden, as I had been told, reclining under the delicious shade of a large orange tree, upon a rustic bench formed by the roots of a neighbouring colossal Ceiba, over which had been spread some cool Spanish matting, whilst all around her grew in

the most luxuriant profusion exotics and tropical ferns of every description. From this beautiful spot the eye wandered over virgin forests and magnificent parks, to the distant waters of the ever blue sea, which now sparkled under the rays of an afternoon sun. It would have been indeed impossible to imagine a more enchanting spot in all the earth than this cool and luxuriant retreat of the great Queen of Fashion now before me.

And how beautiful she looked as she lay there, with all the grace and langour of a Creole, upon that voluptuous bed of flowers, of which she actually seemed a part!—a fairylike Titania! No one seeing her for the first time would ever have thought her the mother of a grown-up man; there were no signs whatever of age in that richly coloured, finely chiselled face; time had brought no cares to that handsome woman, and her forty summers had passed lightly over her head. Such are the daughters of the tropics, always beautiful, always young; like their climate they know no seasons, they remain the enslavers of men to their dying day!

Behind the handsome Duchess stood a little slave in a picturesque costume, fanning her with an immense fan of peacocks' feathers, which he gently waved to and fro over her head, more with the idea of protecting her from the insects, than to cool the balmy, aromatic air of the delicious arbour; whilst by her side, on a lower stool, also covered

with Spanish matting, and playing cards with her, sat an elderly lady, another of her numerous lady companions, and—if her looks did not belie her—another old maid.

“Lord Carlton! ah, so glad to see you; you will join our game, and you will stop to dinner—won’t you?” These were her first words.

I thanked her very much for her kind, cordial invitation, but excused myself as best I could for not accepting it, by saying that I was expected back at the Hotel San Carlos that afternoon; in fact I had some business in the city—“business” is such a capital pretext for getting out of an invitation, when you do not care to accept it, and can find no better reason to offer for not doing so.

The truth of the matter was that I had come in search of Lilian Leigh, and I was determined to see Lilian Leigh before the praiseworthy resolution of confronting her should leave me. That she was not with the Duchess was now evident; but in order to find out where she was, in the course of conversation I asked my fair hostess if Lady Leigh was at the Quinta.

“No,” she answered, good-naturedly; “she left some time ago. So you have heard the great news? I suppose you know that my son is going to be married to her?”

“Yes,” I said, “and permit me to congratulate you on your charming daughter-in-law.”

Her frank, handsome face brightened up. “You

approve then of his choice ! Ah, I was sure of it, how could my son fall in love with one who was not in every respect worthy of him ? ”

The argument was conclusive ; so I repeated her words, trying to contain a smile. “ *I* approve of his choice ! Of course, Duchess, but from what I gather it would appear that everyone is not so pleased with this marriage, as for your son’s sake I should like them to be.”

“ Doña Eduarda has been speaking to you. Ah, I guessed it directly I saw you ! But pray do not let her opinion influence yours, remember that in her, necessity, wedded to habit, has begotten a perfect aversion to the married state ; no wonder then that she should set herself against my son’s marriage. I am not like that ; I may be weak, or anything else she likes to call me, but I love my son, and I see no reason why he should not marry whom he pleases. I confess for my part I would have preferred Filomena Muñoz, whose mother was a great friend of mine ; but I repeat, I love my son too much to interfere. I like Lilian Leigh ; her wit pleases me ; I admire her sprightly American manner ; I see nothing to object to in her, unless it be her age, for she is undoubtedly older than my son ; but perhaps, after all, that is for the best, and then she is rich, very rich, I believe ; and she is not an adventuress, as my friends would have me believe. She has a title, although, it is true, *that* is also rather a question-

able point, for although she calls herself 'Lady,' her husband (poor young fellow, I saw him just before he died), never called himself 'Lord;' however, this is nothing, for once Duchess de Miranda, no one will question her rank."

"On that point, permit me to disperse any doubts you may entertain. Sir George Leigh was the son of a very good old English family, although not noble, or a Lord."

"Well, well, I do not trouble myself about those things," pursued the Duchess. "But, by-the-bye, I should not talk of this marriage to *you*, Lord Carlton; it must be a sore point with you—doubtless a hard blow—but I admire the way you bear it."

I could not help looking up at her surprised. "A sore point with me? a hard blow? What do you mean, Duchess? pardon me if I fail to understand your meaning."

The handsome Duchess looked much confused, and with a movement of her graceful hand, she beckoned to the little negro and to the lady companion to leave her. They retired to a respectful distance.

"We will finish our game later on, good Dorothea; I must speak to Lord Carlton alone."

I could not for the life of me imagine what it all meant. But after a short pause, she kindly took my hand in hers, and said in a hurried tone, as if afraid of what she was going to say,

"I am in no way to blame for this, believe me, Lord Carlton."

"For God's sake, Duchess, explain yourself; what does all this mean?"

The handsome Creole again looked very confused—

"It has always been understood here that you were in love with Lilian Leigh, and indeed, from what I have gathered from her, and from Mrs Herbert, I was under the impression that she had refused your hand before accepting that of my son."

I could not repress an exclamation of indignation.

"Is it possible! Ah, I am very glad I never gave her the chance of doing so!"

"What! did you never propose to her?"

"I? never."

"But you love her; you admire her"

"Oh, no, no . . . and yet believe what you like, Duchess; believe what you like of me, for I shall never be understood!"

The Duchess looked much grieved, for she saw how deeply her words had wounded me, and in pity for her, I now in my turn took her hand and said,

"Do not let the thought of me make either you or your son unhappy, and believe me, I sincerely congratulate him on his marriage."

It was indeed an awkward position for me to get out of, for if I persisted in my denial of having proposed to Lilian Leigh, that would have been

degrading *her* in the eyes of her future husband, to whom it now appeared she had told all sorts of fibs about me ; and yet, if I let him and his mother believe her stories, *I* should pass amongst them for the rejected lover of her I had never for one moment loved.

“ Is it possible, Lord Carlton, that you never loved her ? ” she now said, more and more confused by my silence.

“ Enough of this, Duchess, enough of this . . . time is getting on, and I must return to town. Will you take this as my farewell visit ? I leave the island by the first steamer for England.”

“ I have offended you ! Oh why did I speak of this to you ! what right had I to inquire into your feelings ! ”

“ On the contrary, Duchess, I am greatly obliged to you for your sympathy, and for the very kind and delicate way in which you have tried to console me for the supposed loss I have sustained. Good-bye, I must go now.”

“ Good-bye, Lord Carlton. If ever you return to our island, remember you will find sincere friends, and that this house is ever at your disposal. Do not think badly of me. *Adios y buen viage, amigo mio.*”

X.

“What a strange thing is man ! and what a stranger
Is woman ! What a whirlwind is her head,
And what a whirlpool full of depth and danger
Is all the rest about her ! Whether wed,
Or widow, maid, or mother, she can change her
Mind like the wind : whatever she has said
Or done, is light to what she'll say or do ;
The oldest thing on record, and yet new !”

LORD BYRON.

ON returning to the hotel I again inquired for Lady Leigh, and this time she was fortunately at home, and I found her in her private saloon with her uncle, Professor Farren. She was greatly surprised to see me, and I could perceive that I was by no means a welcome visitor.

“I only come to say good-bye, I am off by the first steamer.”

“Are you going Lord Carlton ?”

“Yes, I have been too long already in this island. England calls me back to her gloomy shores. I have just come from the Cerro.”

Her face brightened up as she heard this.

“You know of my engagement then ?”

“Yes, and of Miss de Fison's defeat and flight.”

She looked at me, and burst out in one of her old silvery laughs which thrilled through my whole

frame. She then led the way into the large balcony which overlooked the Alameda de Paula, where I followed her. Once alone, and where our conversation could not be overheard by Professor Farren, I said,

“Lilian, I am going away, going away for ever ; do we part friends, or not ?”

She looked at me in silence. I then went on :

“We are not always consistent. The cleverest people occasionally commit stupid blunders, just as the most stupid people at certain times brighten up with gleams of intelligence. One may have shown one’s usual good sense during the first two or three days in the week ; but it does not at all follow from this, that one may not do a very foolish thing at the end of it. Now I, who am always so cautious about my behaviour to others, made a fool of myself *one* day ; it is now nearly three weeks ago, and I do not mind confessing it. I was wrong, wrong, I accused you of that for which I alone was to blame. I was unhappy. I felt angry at what Mrs Herbert had told me about the silly scandals of the town, and I foolishly put all the blame on you, on you, Lilian. I was most rude. I could not undo the web in which I had wound myself, so I did the best thing I could under the circumstances. I cut the Gordian knot and ran away. This is all the explanation I can give you.”

She looked at me and then at the people, who

now, in the cool of the evening, were promenading on the Alameda, and a tear ran down her velvet-like cheek.

“Do not excuse yourself ; I am glad you spoke as you did that day ; I am thankful to you for going away, and for the lesson you gave me ; although it did wound me at the time, I confess ; but see, I have profited by it. I forgive you, how could I do otherwise ? But let us forget the past, why should we bring back unpleasant recollections ?”

And the bewitching widow gave me her hand.

“Before I take your hand, Lilian, there is another subject I would mention to you, unpleasant as it is to both of us. I have already told you that I have been to the Cerro, and that I have seen the Duchess ; she has told me certain things which it seems you have said, which are not precisely true.”

She blushed deeply and withdrew her hand.

“What do you mean ! I have forgiven you for your past insults ; do you wish to insult me again ?”

“On the contrary, I am now the injured party ; you have led your future husband and his good-natured mother to believe that I had proposed to you.”

She looked at me in silence, and after a long pause she said in a calm collected tone—

“And so you did !”

She spoke in such a matter-of-fact, self-possessed way, that in spite of my anger I could not repress a smile.

“I suppose you will end by making even *me* believe that I really did do so.”

“But you *did* propose to me, . . . you forget ——.”

“Nothing! I am not joking now, I am in earnest; it is for your good that I speak. If you dare to say such stories again to your husband, or to anyone else, I will contradict you to your face. This very afternoon I had you in my power, I might have ruined you for ever with the Duchess, if I had only told her what you really have done; if I had told her plainly that you had lied—yes, *lied*—when you talked of my having proposed to you. She would have believed *me*, and in spite of all your fascinations you would not have married the Duke. I had you in my power; but no, I did not contradict your statement, as any other man would have done, when his pride was concerned. She believes that you have preferred her son to me. It is not I who will undeceive her, I leave that for you to do.”

Lilian looked now quite overcome and confused, her face flushed deeply, her lustrous eyes dropped before mine. I could see that she was ashamed of herself.

“Always noble,” she said, “always kind. Ah! Carlton, Carlton, forgive me, forgive me; I will

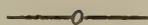
never speak about you to them. But I am glad I am not going to be your wife, for I always feel so small beside you ; I think I should even grow to hate you, or to hate myself, if I were to live with you. But forgive me, . . . I know you will, . . . let us part friends, and I promise you never to speak of you to the Duke."

She was again so irresistible that, this time, I could not help taking her hand.

"You will write to me," she said, "and tell me how you find your little boy when you return to England. Distance will again make you think well of me, . . . and perhaps, some day you will think me as perfect as you at first believed me to be."

Those were the last words I ever heard her speak. And after a friendly shake of the hand, I parted from her without a sigh, for our roads in the future lay widely apart.

N I G H T T H E L A S T .



“ As water-drops which slowly fall,
A pitcher fill by ceaseless flow ;
So, learning, virtue, knowledge, all,
By constant small accessions grow.”

THE MAHABHARATA.

I.

Oh night ! In thy starry shade
Of dim and solitary loveliness,
I learn the language of another world."

LORD BYRON.

I WAS once more standing in the old room where I had first held communion with my beloved angel wife. I was again in that never-to-be-forgotten room of the Hotel San Carlos—all around me slept, for it was near midnight ; but I could not sleep—I could not lie down and sleep through those peaceful hours of the night, when alone I could see my love.

I stepped into the balcony, which was covered with the creepers which almost concealed it. Below me was the peaceful bay of the Havana, with its ever-glinting waves, and around me lay stretched the sleeping town ; whilst over my head, illuminating other worlds with their eternal light, shone the countless stars.

How sublime is thy language, oh night!
How soul-stirring thy starry mantle ! How
absolute and omnipotent thy silent majesty !
And yet, the stillness seems almost audible !
Around me sleeps a great city, and there is some-

thing affecting, even to a feeling of awe, in thus mentally contemplating a whole population with all its different orders, from the nobleman to the beggar, and all their varieties of happiness or anguish, hushed in universal slumber, and all equally enjoying the great restorative of nature—sleep.

But I cannot sleep—Conchita! Conchita! I must see thee to-night; I must once more listen to thy melodious voice. Thou art the ocean, to which flows the river of my thoughts, all my being ever drifts towards thee. Appear, sweet angel—appear and speak of that past which has made us what we are. But no—silence—undisturbed silence reigns around me. It is the silence of the tomb—the silence of death—of the death that divides us!

And yet, how soul-subduing is the perfect stillness, the death-like tranquillity of this sleeping multitude! But hush! The silence is partially broken even while I describe it, and a low solemn strain is wafted over the beautiful bay and the tropical groves around it, and floats towards my window, carried by the warm aromatic land breeze, which, in this privileged country, follows that of the sea after sundown—a breeze that blows from the distant hills to the eastward, and sweeps across many a mile ere it sighs over the walls of the Morro, and ripples the whole surface of the bay. It brings me the solemn swell of the organ from the convent of Santa Maria at Guanabacoa, whose nuns are assembled every

second hour to chant a hymn to the blessed Virgin, their patroness. Death! No; there is no death. This silvery chime reminds me that the ever-flowing stream of human thought and action is hurrying forward, widening as it goes. The great ships which have left the harbour this morning are now ploughing the waves of the Atlantic; the astronomer is at his telescope, the soldiers on the Morro faithful at their watch—and nearer to me still, even in the very next room, I can hear the rustling of a dress, the inexplicable frou-frou which betrays the wakeful presence of Lilian Leigh, who has but just returned from the Quinta at the Cerro, where she has spent a few hours with her future husband; with the man that is so soon to make her a Duchess, and enable her to realise the fondest dreams of her life; she sleeps not, she cannot sleep—her mind is taken up with thoughts she cannot banish; and if, perchance, she throws herself exhausted on her couch, it will only be to dream of triumphs and conquests. Will she remember in her dreams, that on the other side of that wall there is a man whose existence is a mystery to her, whose life problem she can never hope to solve?

No; what am I to her—what is she to me? Our worlds lie far apart. Let her enjoy her triumphs, let her be the queen of society, the centre of attraction of the great world, to which her ambition calls her; and let me remain the

speculating philosopher—the bridegroom of an angel—with the knowledge of a greater world than hers.

And the mighty stream of human thought and action goes on all the time—the toiling eagerness of commerce, the fierce spirit of revolution—are only pausing in brief repose ; sleepless statesmen are dreading the possible crisis of the morrow, and excited patriots are plotting new revolutions, preparing new programmes which, under the name of liberty, will one day, in their turn, enslave humanity ; all this goes on in spite of all, for in this world the motto is—“everybody for himself”—all this goes on, although, to all appearances, nature is given over to undisturbed repose, death-like slumber.

And this in America only, for in the opposite hemisphere it is day, and there all is life and movement, all bustle and noise. No ; undisturbed repose is not to be found anywhere. Life—life, under one form or other, is all we can discover. Even to this solitary balcony, comes from below a sort of whisper, as if I could hear the crumbling and falling away of earth and all created things, in the great miracle of nature, decay, and reproduction, ever-beginning, never ending—the gradual lapse and running of the sand-drops in the great hour-glass of Time.

Time ! time ! And what is time to me ? Is not a whole eternity mine ? When I compare

the little I know, and the smallness of our power of perception with all there is to learn, I cannot but conclude that I know nothing—nothing, and that everything still remains for me to learn.

Life—Death—what are they? Mere sand-drops in the great hour-glass of Eternity—in the great hour-glass, the sands of which will for ever flow. Here we have an April night, serene and illuminated by its thousands—tens of thousands, nay, millions of suns—this sacred shade, this portentous light, this solitude, what is it? It is the presence of God—the felt presence of the Creator over creation—already the green fields awaken, the first buds begin to open, the flowery spring is everywhere around me, the blue vault above smiles, the peaceful waters below reflect the heavenly smile—death?—decay?—no, Resurrection, for there is no death. Borne on in their eternal course, the constituent atoms pass without ceasing from one body to another, from the plant to the animal, from the animal to the man, from the man to the atmosphere, and even this outward body of material, vile flesh changes, changes incessantly its constituting substance during the entire course of our lives, as the flame burns only through the unceasing renewal of elements; and when the soul has fled, the same body, so often transformed during life, definitely returns to nature every molecule it had borrowed from it, with which, in the course

of time, she will form other plants, other animals, other men.

Another day is added to the great mass of buried ages ! Another year ! and oh ! how beautiful creation looks under the starry vault of heaven ! And yet this new life is but formed of death, and does but cover its ruins ! Resurrection, eternal resurrection—but whence comes the sap of these trees which grow eternally green upon this earth of death ? Whence comes the humidity that nourishes their roots ? Whence come all the elements which will cause the beautiful tropical flowers and the many coloured singing birds to appear with the first smiles of the month of May ? From death ! from the ruins of those that have preceded them.

Supreme laws of nature—which rule the universe, and of which we know so little ; only by studying them, and by progressive steps acquiring a more interior knowledge of them, can we ascend to the Creator—to God. When we contemplate the wonderful works of His hands, and gaze entranced upon this ample theatre of the world, considering the stately beauty, constant order, and sumptuous symmetry thereof ; the glorious splendour, and uniform movements of the heavens, the ever renewed fertility of the earth ; the curious forms and fragrant sweetness of plants ; the exquisite frame of animals ; the wondrous mind of man ; and all the other amazing miracles

of nature, can we see God, or can our thoughts pass from the creation to the Creator. Thou, oh nature, art the image of God—but only His image. For as it is only by the positive study of effects that we mount to the appreciation of causes—so it is only by the contemplation of the creation that we can learn to worship the Creator in spirit and in truth.

And as sure as there is a God in the universe—a great universal Spirit animating all things—so spirits are his ministers working in all things. The material body is but a transitory assemblage of particles which do not belong to it, but which a soul has grouped together according to its own type—as God—the great Soul of the universe, has grouped together the constituent elements, and created nature. But spirit is eternal, its organs may fail, but the soul fails not, and whilst our body is slowly built up and renews itself by the perpetual exchange of matter, matter which one day will fall an inert mass, never again to rise, our spirit (*a being*) has ever kept its indestructible identity—has reigned as a sovereign over the matter with which it was clothed, thus establishing, by this universal and constant act, its personal independence, its spiritual essence—unsubjected to the empire of space and time—its individual greatness, *its immortality*.

Conchita! Conchita! thou hast taught me all this. To thee I owe my happiness. Will my

experiences not be of some use perchance to others ?

The happiness I feel, I cannot impart to strangers ; my love is my life, and my life is my God's ; but my knowledge, my speculations, surely I owe them to the world ? The world shall have them. I will write them in a book—my speculations and my experiences, my hopes and my fears, my failures and my triumphs.

In what consists the mystery of life ? By what tie is the soul bound to the organism ? By what process does it escape from it ? Under what form and under what conditions does it exist after death ? What remembrances, what affections, does it preserve ? How does it manifest itself ? These are problems which the world has not yet solved, and which together constitute the psychological science of the future—why should I not publish my speculations, my discoveries—my dreams, whatever men may call them ? They may throw some light on the great problem of existence, and then my life will not have been quite a useless one.

I shall be laughed at, called a fool, a blasphemer, a madman. I care not, for by such names Socrates, Galileo, Columbus, and a host of others were known before me, whom men at last have learnt to appreciate in their proper light.

Certain men may even deny the existence of the soul, as they deny that of God, and will affirm

that moral truth does not exist, that there are no intelligent laws in nature, and that I am but the dupe of a gigantic delusion.

Others, on the contrary, will declare that by a special privilege they are acquainted with the essence of the human soul, the form of the Supreme Being, the state of the future life, and will treat me as an atheist because my reason refuses to be guided by their blind faith. "The blind leading the blind!"

Let those whose view is limited by pride or by prejudice never attempt to understand these anxious longings of my soul; so eager for knowledge, so impressed with the majesty of the creation, so full of love, so jealous for the glory of the Creator: let them throw sarcasm and anathema on the studies I love; I raise my contemplations above them all; their opinions will not influence mine; their laughter will not chain public thought; and their attacks will have as much effect upon the steadily increasing ascendancy of truth over falsehood and ignorance, as if they were to direct them against the rotation of the earth, as did their forefathers.

I agree with the Poet Laureate :

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range.
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.
Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day.
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.
Mother—Age (for mine I know not) help me as when life began :
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings, weigh the
sun—

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set.
Ancient founts of inspiration well thro' all my fancy yet.

Science moves, but slowly, slowly, creeping on from point to point :
Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion, creeping nigher,
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly dying fire.
Yet *I* doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns.

II.

“Mortal ! to thy bidding bow’d,
From my mansion in the cloud,
Which the breath of twilight builds,
And the summer’s sunset gilds
With the azure and vermillion,
Which is mix’d for my pavilion :
Through thy quest may be forbidden,
On a star-beam I have ridden ;
To thine adjuration bow’d,
Mortal ! be thy wish avowed !

LORD BYRON.

As I pronounced these highly spirited verses, and ere I had come to the last lines, the graceful spirit form of my Conchita gradually revealed itself in all its unimaginable and indescribable beauty by my side.

I could not repress a cry of joy, for some time had now elapsed since her last visit, and my heart had longed for many nights past for her angelic presence.

“Your poet is right,” she said in that melodious half whisper peculiar to the inhabitants of the spheres, granted to so few to hear on earth. “And the thoughts of men are indeed widened with the process of the suns, for through all the ages one sole increasing purpose has ever run.

And as men advance, they will find that their progress has been a continuous ascent from ignorance to knowledge, from evil to good. And still onward they speed, still seeking wider fields for action, broader plains for acquiring thought ; onward, onward, for ever and for ever, and thus by mind's growth through science, have we ascended into the unknown. Until at last, in the fulness of all ages, we ascend to God's kingdom,—to that kingdom which our Lord Jesus Christ promised to prepare for us when our earthly career should be at last completed, and when being the children of the resurrection, as St Paul tells us, we can die no more, for death will have no more dominion over us."

Walter. "Do you approve, my beloved angel wife, of my idea of writing these communications which I have received from you, and which make me so happy, or at all events shall I write a part of them for the benefit of others ? Two thousand years ago the greatest of philosophers said to his judges on the breaking up of the tribunal which had condemned him to die : ' Whether life is better than death, the gods alone know ! ' and since that great sage's final declaration of ignorance, in spite of all the wondrous discoveries of science, and of the many schools of philosophy which have succeeded each other, the world still remains as ignorant on this the most important of all points, as it was in the days of the Greek republic. Why should we not each therefore try to solve the great

mystery to the best of our ability? Why should not I in my turn make public the truths you have told me, if indeed truths they be?"

Conchita. "I see no objection to your doing so, provided the world does not misunderstand this new book you propose writing, as it misunderstood the one in which you described our *Honey-moon*, and take for blasphemies against religion what in reality were but philosophical discussions."

Walter. "I know, Conchita of my heart, that I am sadly misunderstood, and erroneously misjudged by the world! I, who am so impressed with the majesty of the creation, so full of love and reverence for the glory of the Creator, that I would fain dedicate my whole existence to prove the supreme justice and all-mercifulness of God, and to improve the moral condition of mankind! but it is for Him who sees our hearts as they really are, to judge us; for man's judgment, even of his own self, must necessarily be a prejudiced and limited one.

"Yet, do you not think, beloved Conchita, that it is almost a duty of mine, now that I have unravelled the great secret of death, and the possibility of communion with those we call the dead, to reveal it to mankind? Just think how many broken hearts I should at once console and render happy; how many bereavements I should soften; what hope and what joy I should bring home to humanity, and what an incontestable proof of

immortality I could at once afford the countless beings who are still labouring on amidst the shades of unbelief and doubt."

Conchita. "You are no doubt right, Walter. Even those who possess the strongest faith in immortality cannot feel so secure of a future and unending existence, as they are sure that they exist now. For what they are, they know; but concerning what they will be after death—or indeed if they will then be at all—they can only believe, and belief can never possess the certainty of knowledge. But if a being they have learnt to consider as dead were to come to them as I come to you, then their hopes would at once be changed into certainties, and immortality would at once be proved beyond all doubt to them. You are right thus far; I am convinced of this, because I cannot help believing that whenever the immortality of the soul shall be established so that men cannot help believing in it; so that they shall imbibe this certainty with the first elements of all knowledge, mankind will become more virtuous and more contented; for how is it possible to be either, in a very exalted degree, dwelling, as the greater part of men do, in the deep and obscure uncertainty of what they really are; what is expected from them, and what will be their fate after death? Taken in this light, the visits of departed spirits to men would certainly afford great consolation and immeasurable happiness; but then think of

the consequences—think how men in their selfishness and ignorance would constantly be calling the souls of their departed friends from their spiritual occupations for the mere trivial and frivolous amusement of the hour, and thus wasting the time of both. Think what dreadful use some wicked and evil-minded men would make of the innocent and ignorant spirits who would come to them, and then above all, think of the dreadful consequences that would arise if such a continual communication with the spirit world, as you and I have maintained, were to become general; when you consider the innumerable quantity of evil, or rather, of yet uncouth and undeveloped spirits, who people the universe, and take into account that the majority of men are as yet but ignorant and uneducated not to say at once wicked. When you think of these things, Walter, and without any prejudice weigh in your mind the advantages that the few would gain against the calamities that it would occasion to the many, I think you will come to the same conclusion that the Church came to long ago on this subject, that these things had better be left alone. It is all very well for holy men and women, such as our saints were, to hold communion with the spirit world, for all their thoughts, all their aspirations, were good and holy, and therefore, as like attracts like, only good and angelic spirits came to them; but for the general run of men, worldly and trivial

as even the best must necessarily be, such communications with the spirits that would alone as a rule come to them, could not fail to be dangerous to their welfare, and certainly produce more evil than good in the world.

“I therefore beg of you, my dear Walter, if you ever, as you just now suggested, write these communications of mine, and give them to the general public, to entreat of them earnestly in every page to dismiss from their minds any thoughts *they* may suggest to them of imitating your example, and never, even for a moment, to trust implicitly to the views entertained and inculcated by those who perhaps are more ignorant than themselves, and whose sole advantage over them is that of having become invisible to their former friends and companions.”

Walter. “Perhaps you are right, my angel, and certainly your arguments are very convincing.

“But now to talk of ourselves, dearest Conchita. The last evening you came to me you promised soon to finish relating the past history of our souls through the ages ; you left your interesting narrative at a most exciting point, and, as is generally the case at the conclusion of the second volume of the novels of the sensational school, everything was at sixes and sevens, and your *dramatis personæ* were in the most awful ‘mess,’ to use a favourite expression of the young ladies who delight in reading them—but *I* must not

speak thus of our past, though we can indeed afford to smile at it now that it is all over. I need scarcely tell you how anxious I am to know the end of our last earthly existence. History tells us of the sad fate of Don Carlos, though it leaves us in doubt as to the causes which occasioned his early and sudden death—whether he fell a victim to his father's jealousy or to his own ambition; whether he owed his death to a father's hand, or to the inscrutable ways of divine providence unaided by human means. As for Don Cesar, I cannot possibly imagine the *denouement* of his passion for his fair sister; and wonder if Blanche were his sister at all; so I am most anxious to know the end. Will you not therefore gratify my natural curiosity to-night, and finish the history of our past—of that past which has made us what we are?"

Conchita cast upon me one of her angelic glances, which seemed to give me new life, and with a sweet heavenly smile playing upon her beautiful lips, she said—

"I will, my beloved Walter, if you desire me to do so, though I must needs be brief this night, as it is already late, and the first rays of the rising sun, as you know, cause my spirit-form to vanish from your sight."

She smiled again upon me, then placing her lovely transparent hand upon my shoulder, she thus resumed the history of our spirits through the ages.

III.

“La causa per la quale Philipo II. s' è mosso a far questo effetto, è solo l' haver S. M. voluto più prestó haver riguardo al servizio di Dio, alla conservazione della religione, de' regui e dé vassalli soui che alla carne e sangue suo proprio, e che ha voluto sacrificare per il predetto servitio l' unico suo figliuolo, perchè non poteva far altro se non voleva esser troppo ingrato delli beneficij que N. S. li fa di continuo.”—*Letter from the Roman Ambassador to the Pope, dated Madrid, 24th of February 1568.*

“As you may imagine, the news of the imprisonment of Don Carlos created the greatest excitement, not only all over Spain, but throughout Europe, yet hardly any one was surprised, for the frequent disagreements between Philip II. and his son were too well known not to have fully prepared every one for some such catastrophe.

The King, who was particularly jealous of all remarks, and would not have his actions unjustly criticised, gave immediate orders that no post should leave the capital until he had himself written the exact particulars of the affair to the different towns and provinces of his kingdoms, and to the various sovereigns of foreign nations; in order that this decisive measure of his government, should not be misrepresented and misjudged, either by his subjects, or by his brother kings.

The ordinary service of the different posts was

consequently delayed for four days ; and on the 22d the royal messengers left Madrid who were to announce to the world the news of the imprisonment and disgrace of Don Carlos.

I shall not attempt to give you an account of the numerous reasons which induced Philip II. to act in the decisive and desperate manner he did. The world has since accused him of displaying too great a rigour, and of acting unjustly and unmercifully towards his unhappy son. Some have even accused him of having planned the Prince's ruin, while others go so far as openly to accuse him of his death. These, however, are all modern suppositions, for at the time, in Spain at least, there was only one opinion, and this—in spite of the deep love I bore the unfortunate Infante, in spite of the pity I felt for his sad fate,—I am obliged to confess was in favour of the King's measures.

Placed as he was, Philip could not have done otherwise. He might, as a father, have forgiven his son a thousand times, excused his faults, overlooked his conduct, agreed even in his opinions ; but as a king, and particularly as the Catholic King of Catholic Spain, he could not permit a man with the opinions and ideas of Don Carlos to succeed him upon the throne.

But you must not imagine, from what I say, that the Prince of the Asturias was actually a heretic, or a Protestant ; his ideas, though evidently much confused and in advance of the age, were not radic-

ally wrong. He was disgusted with what he saw taking place every day around him—for his ideas of right and wrong were very different from those of his father and his ministers—he firmly considered Philip's policy a cruel one; being himself an open-hearted, earnest admirer of truth, he could not sympathise with the secret and obscure means employed by the Cabinet of the Escorial, however much he might have approved of the objects therewith to be attained. He was a true Christian, yet the proceedings of the Inquisition disgusted him beyond measure; in vain did he search the Scriptures for some teachings that might excuse these bloody massacres. He could find none, on the contrary every word uttered by the gentle, merciful, forgiving, and loving Jesus, seemed to him a direct protest against the proceedings of this secret tribunal, so powerful and influential at that time in Spain. It was this that made him turn his thoughts to the teachings of Luther and the German reformers, and that prompted him to obtain from Germany and England, those books which injured his cause so much when discovered in his possession. Yet I do not believe for one moment that he ever went so far as to protest against the religion of his fathers. He had doubts and scruples, but that was all; and his refusal during the latter years of his liberty to confess and to receive the holy sacraments shows plainly how much in earnest he was. Yet I feel sure that if the tribunal of the Inquisi-

tion had actually tried him for heresy, with unprejudiced judges, it must have found him innocent. You were always very religious, Walter, but you never had orthodox faith. When, as the Catholic king Recesvinto, you burnt without mercy, at the instigation of the bigoted Se ren all those whom she suspected of want of faith, you did so to please her; you cared but little whether they were Christians or infidels, you obeyed the commands of a spirit more powerful and more determined than your own; and not having as yet arrived at that state of perfection when right and wrong would stand out clearly before you in all their distinctness, you did so innocently enough.

As Recesvinto you burnt the Moors because they refused to become Christians.

As the Catholic king of Granada the Moors murdered you, because you refused to give up the religion of Christ.

And now as the Prince Don Carlos, the Catholics were to cause your death, because you disagreed with their interpretation of that religion.

Such is the justice of the universe. The faults of one life are expiated in another.

And this is the reason, dearest Walter, why you are so often troubled with doubts and misgivings on the subject of religion during your present life; though I hope these doubts and scruples are now for ever at an end. By some special arrangement

of divine providence, your lot has often been cast amongst the harassing discussions of religious differences; and your noble spirit has had to struggle against them first in one way, then in another, in several different existences.

I hope the detailed narrative I have given you of your past lives upon earth, has afforded you a clear idea of *this* particular phase of the progress of your soul through the ages.

But to return to that particular life.

I have already told you that Philip II. had been Serena in the past; and that as such, that inflexible spirit still clung to you with a certain amount of love. Yet, in Philip II., as in the brave Spanish maiden, whom you elevated to the throne of Spain, in the time of the Goths, religious fanaticism and ambition of universal power were far more developed than the tenderer passions. This caused that great spirit in both the existences, during which it was brought into close contact with your less severe and more affectionate nature, to render your very existence miserable and wretched, when it would certainly have been its chief desire to have contributed to your happiness.

Don Carlos was not a great genius like his father and his grandfather, but he was a better man, neither did he resemble their glorious ancestress, the Catholic Isabel. This I have told you before, yet I think it better to mention it again, in order that you may form a proper

idea of the nature of the curious events which followed.

Don Carlos was a man, with all the weaknesses derived from humanity, with all the prejudices of the day, subject to all the passions of an impressive southern nature. He was not obstinate in error, for his heart was good, he desired good, and all his sentiments were noble; but he was often irresolute in virtue; sometimes he was too aspiring, sometimes too despondent, and always influenced more or less by the very circumstances to which he struggled so hard to become superior.

As for Philip II., his whole character may be described in one word—ambition. Yet there was a great mixture in his nature of good and evil; there was a great deal in him of the despot, of the bigot, and also of the tyrant, still at times he had the feelings of a tender-hearted father. Yet such was his character, that what *he* considered his failings and weak points, were precisely those impulses of tenderness and feeling which any other man would have held as virtues.

But, when speaking of the unhappy differences between the King and the Prince, we must not lose sight of the peculiar interest which almost the whole of the King's officers and advisers had in the Prince's downfall, for private motives of their own, more or less apparent.

The Duke de Alba himself, the greatest friend of Philip, and his principal adviser, was the

deadly enemy of the poor Infante, who had so offended him on the occasion of the ceremony of swearing fidelity at Toledo ; and that crafty statesman and cruel general took very good care not to lose an opportunity of speaking against him to his master. In the friendly letter, addressed by the King to that nobleman on the occasion of the Prince's imprisonment, we see clearly enough what an important part *he* had taken in this unfortunate affair, though at a distance ; for he was at the time in the Netherlands completing his work of destruction.

And the Duke de Alba was not the only one—the Prince d'Eboli, the Duke de Feria, the Inquisitor-General, the Princes of Bohemia, Don Juan of Austria himself, and almost the whole of the nobility and the clergy, were his personal enemies. What he had done to offend them is one of those mysteries which will for ever remain a secret of court intrigue.

On one point there is not the slightest doubt—and that is, that for reasons of private ambition, the men to whose care, at their own request, Don Carlos was entrusted after the night of his arrest, managed, by slow but sure means, to deprive him of his reason. This at least was the common belief of the entire Court at the time—though of course no one dared to express their opinions openly ; but both the Princess Juana and myself

were convinced of this, and such seems to have been the opinion of his aunt, the Queen of Portugal, and of his grandfather the Emperor ; for both these sovereigns sent persons in whom they had entire confidence to Madrid to attend the Prince while in his prison, and to watch the actions of his jailers ; but the Prince d'Eboli, to whose special care he had now been entrusted, refused to admit these foreign gentlemen into the Prince's prison.

Some historians assure us that Don Carlos actually perished at the hands of his jailers. I do not go so far as to say this, but that *some chemical potions* were administered to him, and that both his reason and his health were considerably injured thereby, I for my part firmly believe ; and so at the time did all his friends in the palace, and also the greater part of the unprejudiced outsiders.

As for Philip, he was as innocent of the Prince's death as if he had lived three centuries later ; and the knowledge that his son—his only son and heir, on whom he had concentrated all his hopes, and centred all his ambition—was shut up in his palace, a prisoner, and eventually a madman, rendered him the most miserable man in the whole extent of his wide dominions.

And when he brooded upon the thought that *that* son he so loved, had robbed him of the love of his wife ; that the Infanta Catalina (*that*

newly-born babe), *was* perhaps *his* child, the great but stern heart of Philip suffered agonies such as no other heart ever suffered before or since.

Surely the misery he suffered then atoned for his former crimes.

IV.

“ Quien ha de estar seguro,
Pues la Fenix que sola tuvo el mundo,
Y otro Carlos segundo
Nos lleva el hado duro ?
Y vimos sin color tu blanca cara
A su España tan cara
Como la tierra rosa delicada,
Que fué siu tiempo sin razon cortada.”

FRAY LUIS DE LEON *in his Ode to Don Carlos.*

FORLORN and disowned, sorely tried, and sadly changed, his once handsome face pale, and haggard, his strength of manhood gone, his mind clouded, deprived of his rank in the world, and of his place amongst living creatures, the Infante of Spain, Don Carlos, Archduke of Austria, and Prince of the Asturias, the heir presumptive to the thrones of Spain, Naples, Portugal, Sicily, Mexico, Peru, Brazil, Navarre, Parma, Lombardy, the Netherlands, Palestine and the Indies, pined in his father's palace, a wretched prisoner.

The rooms occupied by him during his long captivity, though comprised in that part of the royal palace set apart for the heir to the throne, were not the apartments he had formerly inhabited; they were far smaller, poorly and scantily furnished, and situated in one of the old towers which had belonged to the primitive Moorish structure. The

windows, which were mere loop-holes, were strongly barred with iron, and heavy chains of the same hung before the doors which communicated with the rest of the Alcazar.

In this gloomy but safe prison the poor Prince was subjected to a rigorous and severe captivity ; the whole of his household was dismissed, and only a few gentlemen, whom every one knew to be his acknowledged enemies, were permitted to be near him. Neither his aunt, the Princess Juana, nor I, were allowed to visit him, and his faithful friend, Don Cesar, only saw him at rare intervals, and then not alone, and but for a few minutes at a time. During the first days the Duke de Feria had been entrusted with the responsible post of chief jailer, but afterwards Ruy Gomez de Silva, the husband of the Princess d' Eboli, succeeded him. The Princess d' Eboli was one of my ladies-of-honour, who afterwards became celebrated in history on account of her romantic adventures with Antonio Perez, and has been immortalised by Schiller in his great tragedy of *Don Carlos*.

From this time no one was allowed to approach the poor prisoner without the permission of the Prince d' Eboli, and even then, only conversed with him in his presence ; the subject of his captivity was forbidden to be mentioned, and no news of any kind were to be given to him, neither was news of him to be given to the world. Thus his jealous jailers managed to cut him off so completely from the outer world, that at the end of a

few months no one troubled himself any more about the unfortunate Prince, and his very existence almost was forgotten, except by a few sympathetic hearts.

Yet if the King had died, Don Carlos would have immediately succeeded him upon the throne ; and as long as that oath taken by the whole nation at Toledo remained valid, every Spaniard would have been forced to recognise him as his sole king and supreme lord. His enemies trembled at this thought, yet they could not of their own accord annul an oath so solemnly taken by the entire nation upon the Sacred Scriptures, and before the Primate of the country. In the natural course of events Don Carlos sooner or later would become their king, and they knew but too well that when he came to the throne their downfall would be certain. Their one all-absorbing thought therefore was to render the unfortunate Prince incapable of ever wearing the crown, but before doing this, the Prince d' Eboli, who was not a bad man, and had in former days been his intimate companion, offered him an alternative, an alternative which may be thus expressed in a few words, but which he took good care to render as pleasing as possible to the poor Prince. Don Carlos was solemnly to swear that he would give up all claim to the crown, that he would change his name and retire to France, or England, where a certain sum of money would be

remitted to him periodically, provided he remained in obscurity ; that under these conditions alone, he would be permitted to escape one night, and reach the frontier in safety, his guardians giving out to the world the next morning that in his endeavour to escape, he had fallen into the deep moat below his windows, and had been drowned—a story which could excite no suspicion, and would at once render vacant the title of Prince of the Asturias, and heir to the crown.

I do not believe Philip himself had any knowledge of this vile plan, which would have deprived his son of all the privileges which he inherited from his ancestors ; but when the Prince d' Eboli mentioned his scheme to Don Carlos, he boldly assured this unfortunate Prince that the King, his father, had himself proposed it ; and that if he refused to avail himself of this chance, he would forget that he was his father, and have him tried by the secret tribunal of the Inquisition for treason and heresy, which in those days meant almost the same thing, and have him publicly executed before the whole Court.

Don Carlos rose, and for the first time trod that narrow cell with the haughty step of a monarch.

“Now that I once more see before me the broad and royal road to power and greatness, shall I be again condemned to see it vanish and disappear ?” he exclaimed. “A vast empire rises before me ; I stretch my hand to grasp it, but death waves his

skeleton arm and pushes me back, back to the nothingness of common men. If I were what I once was, I might yet hope to live on many years and to descend to the grave at a ripe old age. It is because I am awakened at last to the great future that I see before me, that life shrinks and shrivels up like a scroll consumed by the very flame that lights the world. But even so, can I consider life as a thing greater than the things that I would live for? No, a thousand times, no; I will not try to escape. Let the King take my life if he will, I shall die as I was born, an Infante of Spain."

"But you will be free; you will be happy yet," in vain remonstrated the hard-hearted jailer.

"Free! happy!" answered Don Carlos; "talk not of freedom to me—there can be neither freedom nor happiness for a man who knows he has bought them with the loss of his honour."

The question of his escape was never mentioned after this, but from that moment his mind, once so clear and bright, became daily more and more clouded.

A commission of the highest Council of Castille had been charged to undertake the forthcoming trial, the Cardinal Espinosa, grand inquisitor, being the president; the papers containing the account of the process which John II., King of Aragon, the father of Ferdinand the Catholic, had brought against his son, the Prince of Viana, were brought from Barcelona in order to

give them an idea of the way in which they should conduct the trial of so great a personage. But this supreme tribunal came to no decided conclusion, for though all its members were of opinion that Don Carlos should be condemned to death, they knew that the King, whom they feared to offend, would not have listened to this; so the whole business soon came to an end.

Thus passed six long months, the health of the Infante became worse and worse, his constitution weaker and weaker, until, on the 24th of July 1568, he finally expired at the age of twenty-three years, six months and fifteen days.

His death, which has been attributed to so many different people, may be said to have been a natural one, brought on by the sad state of his reason and the general break-up of his constitution; the thoughts which had for so long a time preyed upon his mind, together with the strict and cruel regime to which he had been subjected during his long captivity, are enough to account for his early death. Yet it is strange that history should have always imagined that nature had been aided on this occasion by practised and powerful hands.

Such was the end of your last earthly career, my Walter, of that career which promised to be so brilliant—and which, by one of those freaks of fate which human minds fail to understand—finished in a prison, and in an early grave.

V.

“ Carisima Isabel reyna de España,
 Tan perfecta ó la mas que se hallára
 En quanto el sol rodea y el mar baña.
 Tu tierna juventud asegurára
 Largos años de vida venturosa
 Antes que el lamentable fin llegára.”

PEDRO LAINEZ *in his Ode to Elisabeth de Valois.*

YOU are anxious, my dear Walter, you tell me, to know the end of the history of Don Cesar, and to learn whether the beautiful Blanche he so fondly loved was really his sister or not. I will not keep you long in suspense, though the unfortunate man himself remained so and suffered torments of anxious doubt from his inability to solve the mystery, for nearly a year after that last conversation with Blanche in the convent.

But when Don Carlos died, and his funeral—which took place with the greatest solemnity at the Escorial—was over, he felt himself, for the first time, free to proceed to Bayonne, where his mother, Doña Luz de Castro, was still residing in a convent, to beg of her to tell him all she knew.

At first she refused to do so, and swore that no power on earth should induce her to reveal this mystery—that Cesar was the son of the king, and

that as to Blanche, she knew nothing whatever about her birth ; but when the good old lady learnt that the happiness of her son was at stake, that Cesar would go mad if he did not find out the truth, and that the poor girl, whom she had so loved from a child, would be miserable for life if the mystery of her birth were not solved, she at last consented to tell all she knew ; but not before she had exacted from her son a solemn promise that he would not reveal it to the king.

The following is a brief account of what Blanche learnt from him on his return to Madrid soon afterwards, and what she hastened to inform me the next day, for we had now no secrets from one another.

It would seem that his mother did not willingly tell Cesar all that I tell you now, but that he drew it from her partly by persuasion and partly by indirect questions. He was determined to know all the truth, and he succeeded in obtaining it before he finally returned to Madrid, and to the arms of his Blanche.

Doña Luz had been the daughter of a younger son of the old Castillian family of Castro. When quite a girl she had been forced to marry a man much older than herself solely because he possessed a large fortune, and was a captain of the King's guard. The King of Spain at the time was the great Kaizer Karl, and he generally lived in Germany, but his son, Philip, (the Prince of the

Asturias of those days,) inhabited the old royal palace of Valladolid, and it was here that Doña Luz and her elderly husband usually resided. The Court of Spain in Valladolid was an exceedingly dull and serious one, but assemblies and state receptions were occasionally given at the palace; and the solemn Court was sometimes enlivened by a great *auto da fé*, or by solemn processions in the cathedral; and on these occasions, the young Prince could not but notice the fair face and charming figure of Doña Luz, who always appeared to his eyes the most beautiful and fascinating of all the ladies present. One night at the Palace he spoke to her, and after that whenever they met they had long and tender conversations. His tutor and his various lords-in-waiting rather encouraged this growing passion, under the impression, I suppose, that the vices of a king make the fortune of his servants—but Philip was never really very much in love with the fair lady. She however was flattered by his admiration, cold as it was, and I suppose encouraged him. The consequence was that one fine day she came to him in tears and told him that she had borne him a son. Philip believed it and was charmed—he had the boy brought to the palace, and told everyone that it was his, though Doña Luz begged of him to make as little scandal as possible. Now it seems all this was untrue. Don Cesar was indeed her son, though not Philip's,

but the child of her own husband ; and she now assured him, that it had been at the instigation of the latter, and with the hope of obtaining future favours and riches for him, she had consented to bring dishonour upon that husband's name in order to improve his position. The story, however strange, was true enough. She had never insisted in the deception practised upon the Prince, and had always declined to profit by it.

After the death of her ambitious husband, she had left Spain and had never returned. But her son had been brought up at Court, and the King still believed him to be his son ; so she begged Cesar not to undeceive him, and thus expose her in her old age to his anger, but advised him to marry Blanche secretly, and to quit Madrid for ever.

Such was the history of Don Cesar's birth, as narrated to him by his lady mother at Bayonne, and such her advice ; which I—when informed of all the particulars—seconded with all my heart.

Blanche and Cesar were therefore married in secret in my private chapel, no one being present but myself, and the chaplain who performed the ceremony, in whom we had full confidence. For some time the king still insisted on his daughter's marriage with the Duke de Feria, as he had at first arranged, but seeing the girl's undisguised dislike to that old courtier, nobleman and grandee of Spain though he was, and fearing to

render her unhappy, he at last gave up all idea of her marrying; and consented to her leaving the convent in which she had resided until then, and allowed her to live in peace with Don Cesar de Castro, whom he still believed to be her brother.

Thus they lived for some months until my death, when there being no one left in Madrid whom they cared for, they quitted the capital, never to return. Philip was too broken-hearted at the time to pay much attention to their movements, and when, sometime afterwards, he discovered their flight, they were already settled with Doña Luz near Bayonne, and out of his reach. There, I believe, they lived for many years in perfect happiness surrounded by their children, and making the happiness of Doña Luz who lived to an advanced age.

To return to myself.

I had nothing now left to live for—the sad and tragic end of Don Carlos had been my death-blow—and soon afterwards I also was permitted to leave this miserable world in which we had suffered so much; and to join him in the happier regions of spiritual life.

My death was a calm and peaceful one; I scarcely suffered at all, and before I died Philip came to my bedside to beg my forgiveness for all he had made me suffer during the few years we had been married. In that solemn hour I confessed all to him—my love for his son, and my inability, in spite of my best resolutions, to forget him—but,

at the same time, I assured him of my innocence and of my fidelity to him, and he believed me.

He then told me that he had always loved his son, whose sad fate had destroyed his happiness for ever ; that after his death and mine there would be no more enjoyment for him in the world. He swore to me that he had taken no part whatever in his death ; that he was innocent of all his sufferings, and that even when the thought of my love for him had crossed his mind, and presented itself with all the horrible attributes of truth—he had never desired his death or his ruin, for, in spite of all, his love for him had ever been the strongest passion in his breast.

Such were Philip's last words to me, and I am convinced of their truth. He was innocent of his son's death, however much to blame others may have been for it. He took my two little daughters in his arms, and promised me to cherish them with all his heart. They were the only children now left to him.

I soon afterwards expired, and found myself at last in your arms, my dearest husband, and my first and only love !

VI.

"I hold it truth with him who sings
To one dear harp in diverse tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

.
"With faith that comes of self-control,
The truth that never can be proved,
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul to soul."

A. TENNYSON.

I WAS at last yours, dearest Walter ; life had divided us, death now re-united us ; and the ties of earth once broken, we were again free to love each other ; but with what a different love ! We had now learnt to suffer when deprived of each other's society ; our spirits had been purified, and we were now worthy of one another.

Three hundred years we passed together side by side—three hundred years of almost perfect happiness. But we were as yet far from being perfect ourselves. We saw beings happier around us than even we were, for their spirits were even purer and wiser, and we longed to become like them. But to accomplish this we still needed to learn one more lesson ; and thus it came about that we were both once more incarnated on the earth ; you in

free, progressive England, I in dear old Spain and we both learnt the necessary lessons in our respective countries, the lessons that are destined to profit us both in the future.

You developed your reasoning faculties, I acquired more faith,—you obtained knowledge, I obtained goodness; and after a time, sympathy and circumstances directed your steps towards the sunny south, and your love guided you to the fair city of Seville, where we met once more and our spirits recognised each other through our respective earthly disguises. Concepcion Vargas became the wife of Walter, Lord Carlton, and then followed that ever-to-be-remembered honeymoon, when faith and reason fought in our minds the battle which had been impending for ages; the battle which your sufferings as Muley Ahmet and Don Carlos, and my trials as Berenguela and Elisabeth de Valois, had rendered almost necessary—a battle which all spirits must fight for themselves sooner or later—and we became once more the happiest of beings.

But one day—death, which before had united us, divided us once again. I was taken from you my Walter; this was to be the last trial for your spirit, but it was a hard one. Ignorant of the wise laws which govern our destinies, you gave yourself up to despair, you believed you had lost me—lost me for ever—only because I had become invisible to your mortal eyes, while, if you

had only turned to your heart, it would have told you that I was still there, that no power in heaven or earth could tear me from you !

In your despair you quitted England and the newly-born being whom God had given to your keeping to educate and cherish—for he had been dear to you in the past—and you went to America. There, in a new country, amidst new scenes and new surroundings, you met another woman, Lilian Leigh, whom you believed loved you—loved you as I had done ! and you tried hard to respond to her pretended affection ; to feel for her as you had felt for me ; but your heart was true, it resisted the temptation of your senses, and remained faithful to me.

Oh Walter ! How could you ever for one moment have thought of Lilian Leigh, a stranger to you—a being whom you had never met before in any of your earthly careers—who could have no real affection for you—whose heart is incapable of feeling a noble, disinterested, all-absorbing passion, such as love should be between husband and wife—how could you make her the rival to your Conchita, who had suffered so much for you, who had loved you for so many centuries with a more than human love, who was still by your side, trying hard to make her presence known to you !

What I suffered then no one can tell, though at times I imagined you were not quite a stranger to my presence—invisible though it was. But my prayers were heard, and I was one day permitted to

communicate with you, through the mediumship of Dr Slade, in New York. But my ambition was to make my presence known to you, and to appear before you without the aid of any third person.

For nearly five months I was gradually preparing your organism and developing it, widening the avenues, and deepening the channels through which thought can descend from the celestial spheres so that I might be able, some day, to make myself once more visible to you, even while on earth. The responsibility of thus taking control of a human frame that is inhabited by another spirit is no trifling matter, and therefore it is but seldom that God allows us to do so ; and, indeed, it is only permitted for some particular reasons, and when it will benefit humanity. I say this that you may caution those who, in moments of excitement, express a wish to become mediums or seers. They do not know what they desire. For to become a medium implies in some cases, to be the slave of every spirit that may gain access to theirs, through sympathy, impulse, favour, or desire ; they should therefore daily pray to God that they may not become mediums, for it might be dangerous and prejudicial to the health of their souls as they might only lay themselves open to the influence of the wicked or undeveloped spirits, who are only too desirous and ready to take possession of earthly organisms in order to enjoy, through them, the pleasures of the flesh, which they have been obliged to give up with their material

bodies, and for which they still pine, and are constantly watching for opportunities to enjoy by this means. But when to become a medium means to resign yourself to a known and qualified guidance, that your individuality may be encouraged and developed, but never usurped ; then pray—pray earnestly but cautiously for the best gifts—leaving aside all that may gratify mere personal curiosity, or the desire of being known as a medium, and remembering that the discernment of spirits is one of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

I knew this, and I therefore entered upon this responsibility with the greatest possible trepidation, wishing, with the utmost ardor of my soul, to possess all knowledge concerning spiritual life. I also wished, no less earnestly, to have the means of communicating that knowledge to you, my beloved companion. I had learnt from my guides—but chiefly from my father, during my short stay in the planet Vega, which I described to you some nights ago—the great blessing of the power of imparting knowledge ; and I thought that for me to possess the secrets and wonders of the world beyond death, and have no voice wherewith to expound them to you, my second self, was indeed but an incomplete happiness ; therefore, when this proposition was made to me by my guardian angel, I entered upon it most prayerfully, making the solemn promise that in all difficulties and

cases of emergency where I found myself incompetent wisely to control and direct you, I would seek the assistance of those who had led me to earth ; and thus month after month passed, but I could not sufficiently raise your mind to the height necessary for this purpose of spiritual thought. I might have sundered the tie that bound your spirit to your body, or I might have produced irreparable injury to your mental structure ; so I was obliged to work upon your brain as carefully as the gardener cultivates the tender flower, stimulating such faculties as I wished to use, but always cautious not to over-stimulate them ; and this is why I had to delay so long before I could hold the communications I now nightly enjoy with you, and was obliged to wait until you were finally prepared to receive them.

As I had hoped, my re-appearance by your side was sufficient to counteract the influence of the bewitching Lilian—and now that you have won the victory and conquered your last temptation, you must return once more to your old home in England, and dedicate the few years which are left you of earthly existence, to the pleasant task of educating the young spirit of our beloved child—our Raphael—for the tender and gentle soul of our infant son must be trained and tutored through yet one more earth-life, ere it can accompany us and ours to the haven where we shall one day be united ; to that beautiful port where we are to find at last the recompense of all our toils

and struggles—the completion of our united existences. He has always been beside us; now in one character, now in another, but he always will be our friend; and in heaven, as on earth, his place is by our side, and it is the same with thy beloved mother and mine, and my dear father, and all those we have loved and cherished on earth—for true love can never die.

The faithful companion spirit of our dear child—Olympia, or Blanche, as you like best to call her—is also in the world at this moment, and you must take care of our little son until he is grown up, and those two can once more meet as lovers upon this very earth in which they have loved each other so truly—then you will be free to join me in the celestial spheres.

Now you know all, beloved Walter; you know the why and the wherefore of our existence, the reason of our happiness, the mystery of our love. It is the past that has made us what we are; but let not the thought of it weigh too heavily on your mind, and never forget, even for a moment, that it is all over now, and that an eternity of love and happiness awaits us in heaven, from whose golden shores no traveller can again return to inhabit the earth, and where with God's grace, we shall all be together, the happiest of beings through an interminable course of ever-increasing ages, having fought the good fight, and obtained the victory over sin, and consequently over death, which is the sting, because the consequence of sin.

FINALE.

When all is done and said,
In the end, this shall you find,
He most of all doth bathe in bliss
That hath a quiet mind.

Our wealth leaves us at death,
Our kinsmen at the grave ;
But virtue of the mind, unto
The heavens with us we have."

THOMAS, LORD VAUX, 1521.

THREE months afterwards I was seated one fine autumn afternoon in the Gothic library at Carlton Hall; the same dear room in which I had spent so many happy hours with my darling wife. She was gone now—gone, but not away, only gone from the sight of the idle strangers that might cast a passing glance of meaningless curiosity into that room—for she was there by my side in spirit, and I knew that her love ever surrounded me.

My boy was playing beside me, a fine little fellow, the very picture of his mother, for he possessed a miniature edition of her delicately-chiselled features lighted with large dark eyes, and surmounted by long wavy golden locks. He was more than one year old now, my own dear Raphael, the being I loved, and still love most in this world !

As I looked upon him with the ardent all-penetrating gaze of a father, the truth of my Conchita's words appeared to me more and more true, and I often found myself repeating that beautiful ode of Wordsworth's—

“ Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar ;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
From God, who is our home ;
Heaven lies about us in our infancy !
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy ;
The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.”

Indeed, as I daily gazed upon that lovely boy, whose dark violet eyes, which so resembled those of my Conchita, seemed to look upon me with a strange look, a look as if of vague recollection of something beyond the world, I wondered whether he remembered aught of that past, in which we had been thrown so much together, of that past which was also my past, and which my angel wife had narrated to me in our nightly intercourse. At times I thought that in his angelic gaze I

could detect something that spoke more to my heart, perhaps, than to my merely material eyes, of that past ; but his lips were silent—he had not yet learnt to give utterance to his thoughts, another year must elapse before he could be able to reveal to me the mysteries of his past, and by that time—he will have forgotten them.

“Mighty prophet ! seer blest !
On whom those truths do rest ;
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave ;
Thou, over whom thy immortality
Broods like the day, a master o’er a slave,
A presence which is not to be put by ;
Thou little child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being’s height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife ?
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life !”

Such were the thoughts that were troubling me that day, and the words of the great poet occurred almost insensibly to my mind, when a servant entered the apartment, bringing me two letters which had come by the afternoon post. They both bore foreign post-marks ; one that of New York, the other of Madrid. The former, when opened, I found to be a short and formally printed invitation, which ran thus :—

“ Mr Joseph J. de Fison requests the pleasure of Lord Carlton’s company at the marriage of his

daughter, Miss Wilhelmina Violetta de Fison, to Mr Albert Gordon Alexis, editor and proprietor of the *New York Crier*, which will be celebrated on the 15th of August, at Trinity Church, New York."

The date, and the address of the bride, followed in smaller type.

I then opened the other, which proved to be a long and closely written letter in the delicate hand-writing of a lady. On the rose-tinted and highly scented envelope were the initials "L. M.," gracefully interwoven in golden characters and surmounted by a ducal coronet.

It ran thus :—

"MY DEAR LORD CARLTON,—I dare say you will wonder who can be writing to you from Spain, for I suppose you have ere this forgotten who I am, though at one time you pretended to be very fond of Lilian Leigh.

"Ah! things have changed very much since those days, and I suppose that we also have changed, but to what extent I dare not calculate! Pray forget this last word, I fear it sounds a little American, and now I am an American no longer (*Gracias a Dios!*), but a true Española, and am daily complimented on my Spanish, to say nothing of my appearance!

"And, *a propos*, this brings me once more to

talk of myself, and of my doings, which have been indeed ‘grand doings’ since we last parted on the balcony of that dear, old, uncomfortable, delicious hotel, “the San Carlos.”

“After my marriage with the Duke, which you no doubt read in all the newspapers, and I need not now describe to you, I left the Havana with my husband in one of the regular steamers for Cadiz, where we landed in safety sixteen days afterwards ; we then proceeded to our castle at Miranda. It is really a splendid old place, surrounded by an extensive park, and its grim towers, hundreds of years old, are reflected upon the blue waters of the Ebro, which flow almost under our windows.

“And here we passed the rest of our honeymoon, which went off *à merveille*, and was altogether a very happy one, and very different from most honeymoons, for having a large party of gay friends, stopping with us all the time, we never found it weighing heavily on our hands, and I need scarcely tell you that not even the smallest cloud came to darken our mutual enjoyment.

“By the bye I must tell you *in petto*, that I like my husband very well, indeed we agree wonderfully, and somehow or other always find something to talk about when we meet. Altogether I am really very happy, and I have no doubt he is the same.

“After two months passed at Miranda-del-Ebor

in an uninterrupted succession of gaieties; we came here, where I have taken up my abode in the gorgeous palace of the Miranda's, an immense building, erected some two hundred years ago, by a member of our family, who half-ruined himself with the decorations he introduced into the apartments. Here I am now, and here I intend to remain all the winter, excepting a few hurried visits which I shall be obliged to make to Paris, where, by the bye, I have engaged a lovely little hotel as a *pied à terre*, close to the Champs Elysees, in order to get new toilettes, and study the fashions.

"The society in Madrid is charming, and I believe it had the good taste to find me the same. I was presented by the Duquesa de Alvareda to the interesting Princesa de las Asturias, (the sister of his Majesty,) who received me most kindly in a private audience; and since then balls and parties have succeeded each other so quickly that I have scarcely had time to go to the Opera half-a-dozen times, although you know how fond I am of music, and I have the very best box in the *Teatro Real*.

"At this moment I am very busy superintending the arrangements for a grand fancy dress ball which I am giving for the young king on the 15th. I am having the ball room newly furnished *à la chinoise* that it may harmonize with my dress, which is going to be something too wonderful to describe. It is a profound secret as yet, and no one is to have an idea of it until the great night arrives.

I need scarcely tell you that Worth is the *artiste* who has undertaken this difficult responsibility.

“I like the Spaniards very much, they are certainly most gallant, and if they would only talk a little less of politics, I think they would be by far the most agreeable people in the whole world. There is a young Count here who is particularly devoted to me, such a fine handsome fellow, so bright and gay; I am sure you would like him awfully if you saw him, and I have a great mind to adopt him as my *cavaliere servente*, an Italian fashion which *à propos* I should much like to see introduced into Spain.

“But I must say adios now, dear Lord Carlton, for my jeweller is waiting in the pink boudoir—such a love of a room, all rose-coloured satin and Brussels lace—and if I do not go to him at once I shall never have my pearl and diamond tiara ready for the ball to-morrow at the Countess de Fuentefiel’s, and I shall be obliged again to wear the emerald one, which I am ashamed to say I have worn already four times this season. So good-bye for to-day. If you have time, do write and tell me how you manage to pass your time in dull stupid England, during these cold and foggy months of winter. I suppose you could not be induced to come to Madrid for a few weeks, and be at my ball on the 15th? Now that would really be most charming of you, and you would make me so happy if you would accept this invitation; I need

scarcely say how glad the Duke will be to see you again.

Pray, believe me yours ever truly,

LILIAN DE MIRANDA.

“*P.S.*—Give a thousand kisses for me to your dear little boy. You have no doubt heard of Miss de Fison’s approaching marriage to Mr Alexis. I suppose the poor girl could get nothing better. However, he is very rich, *à ce qu’ on dit*, and I daresay quite good enough for her, although he is only an American citizen.

“The Dowager Duchess continues living at the Havana, but I hear she has parted with both Doña Eduarda, and Doña Eulalia, which wise measure I quite approve; they had a great deal too much influence over her. One of them, it is said, has entered a convent, but I cannot tell you precisely which; the other has no doubt been handsomely provided for.

“My uncle, the Professor, has returned to Boston, and he tells me in his last letter that he has written a book all about Cataplasms or Protoplasms, or something like that, but I am not quite positive as to the right title, and I have no time now to hunt up his letter to spell it correctly. I believe it is to prove that nothing is and nothing is not—but every thing’s becoming. I daresay it is very amusing.”

When I had finished reading this letter, only one thought passed through my mind, and that was one of thankfulness that I had been saved from becoming her husband. When I could at last collect my ideas I exclaimed—

“And this is the account of the way she spends that time which was given to her to prepare and educate herself for eternity! To think that but for Conchita I might have been foolish enough to have married this woman, and become the most miserable of men for all the rest of my life!”

I felt really angry with her when the thought came to my mind that I might at this very moment have been her husband, if Providence had not otherwise ordained, and my beloved angel-wife had not arranged these things for me and interfered in my behalf.

And yet I suppose half the women one meets in society are as frivolous, and perhaps the men too, if perchance they are not worse. I wonder if they ever ask themselves, when they return from a late supper or an early ball, why they are in this world at all? What is the object of their lives? or what will become of them after death? Surely they must think of death at times, for such sad thoughts are, alas! but too often most painfully brought to mind, and will even glide unawares into the gayest and most volatile and frivolous minds. But I suppose they really have no time to answer these awkward questions, and all live so fast

now-a-days, and their time is so precious, that it would seem an irreparable loss of it to think of these things at all, until they really are brought home to them.

And yet, people pretend to believe themselves immortal, and entertain a dim undefined idea of necessary rewards and punishments after death. I wonder if the majority of the men and women of the gay world ever ask their consciences what rewards they really deserve, or what kind of happiness they are fitted to enjoy in the next world, when balls and theatres, clubs, dinners, and hunts, have ceased for them in this ?

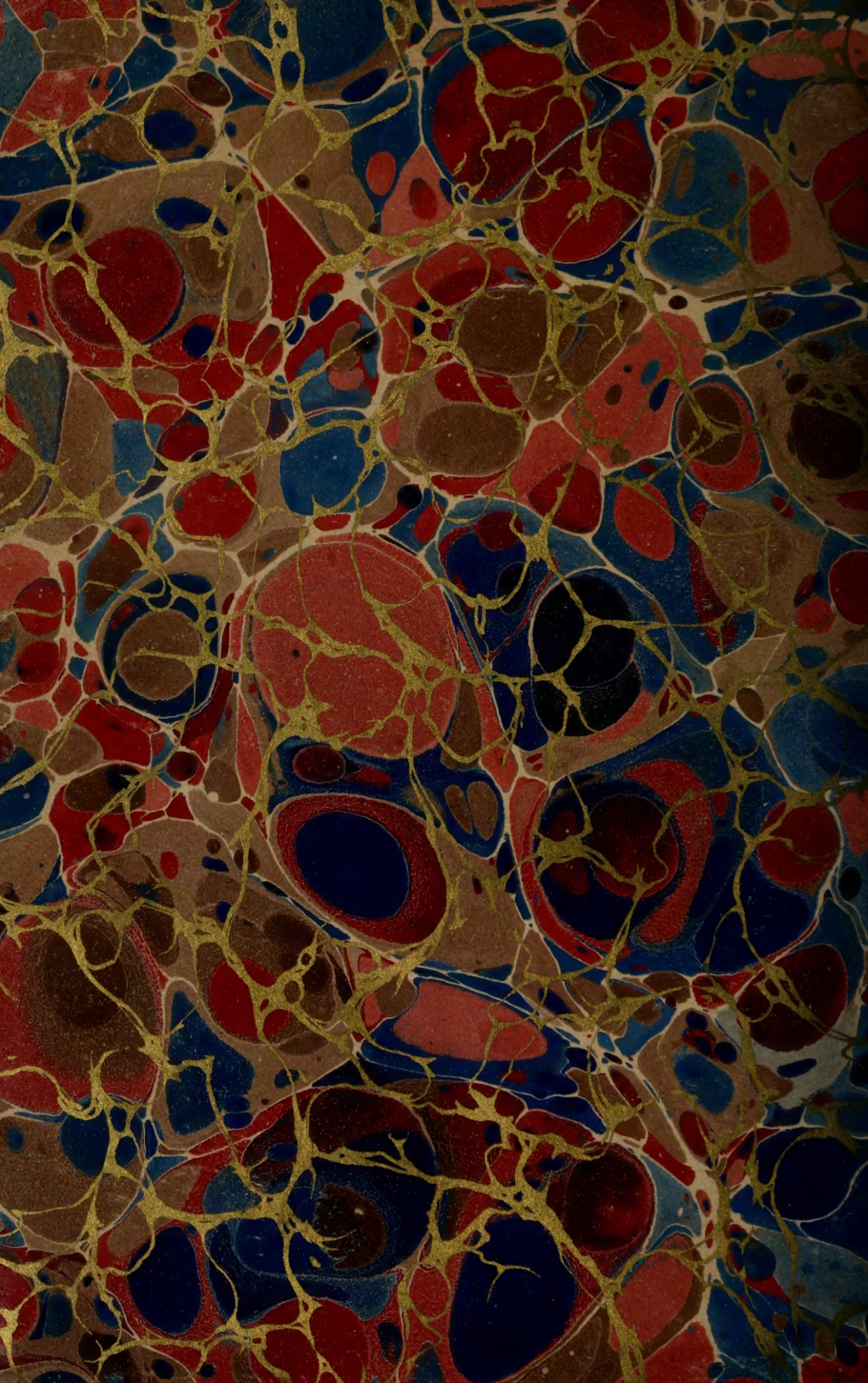
Ah me ! Perhaps they do not know whether they possess a conscience or not, any more than they know whether they have hearts and souls, however much they may flatter themselves by speaking about them to their friends. I am sure Lilian Leigh scarcely knew she had a heart except when she felt it swell with pride, flutter with vanity, or tremble with envy, but perhaps after all the liver and not the heart is the seat of our material well-being, the instigator of good or evil deeds ; and as for conscience—well—I am not within her to know exactly what she feels, and perhaps at times *her* conscience, wide and elastic as it must necessarily be, may trouble and embitter her sweet slumbers, when after a ball at which she has been the acknowledged Queen, and conquered all the men, and triumphed over

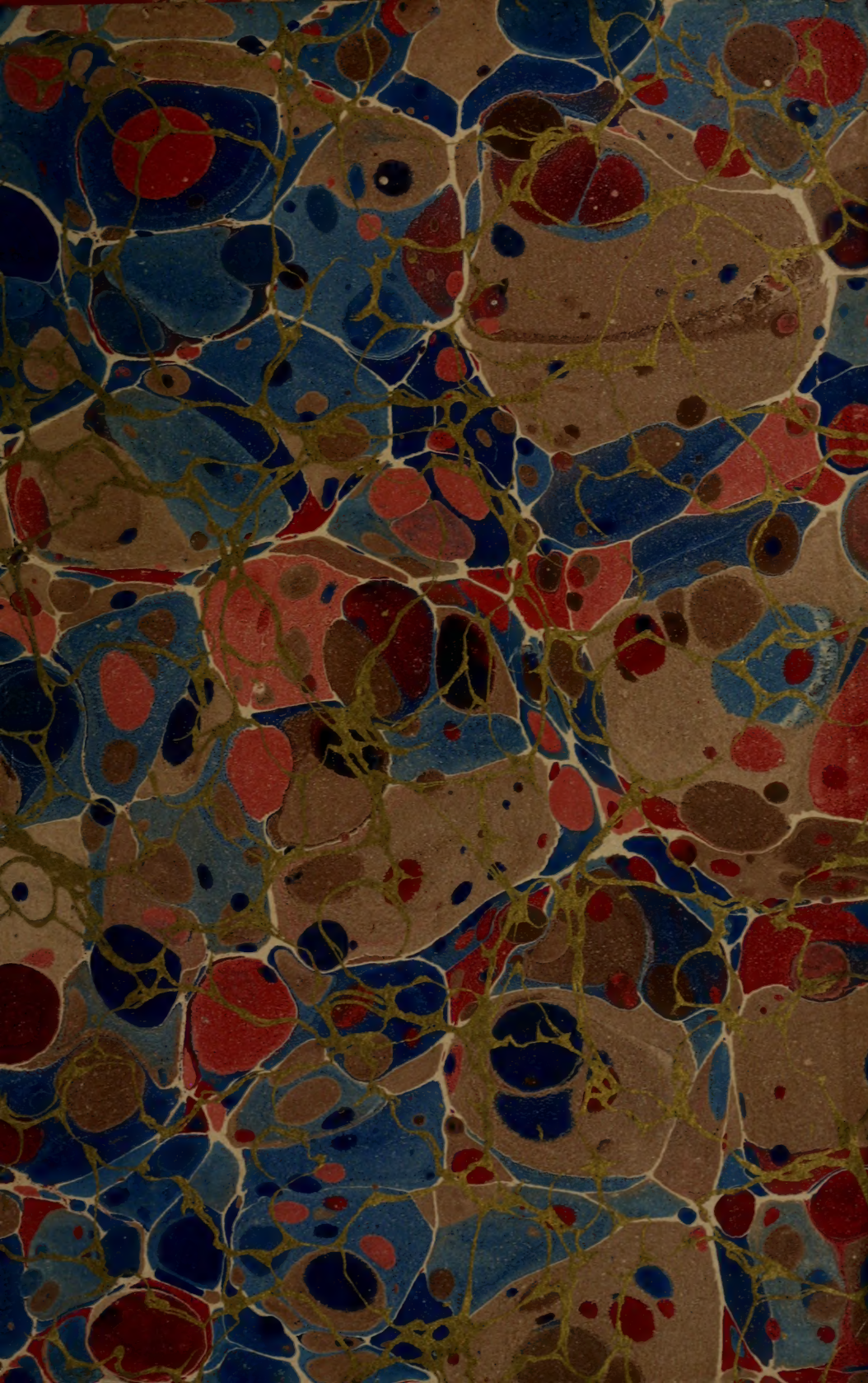
all the women, she retires at sunrise to her couch of satin and lace.

Thoughts such as these have induced me to write this book, and to give to the public the knowledge I have gained from my own experience and from the nightly visits of my beloved angel wife. Would to God that it may do some good, and induce people to think !

But moralising is almost as much out of fashion as morality itself; and philosophy is most unpopular now-a-days amongst novel readers; so I am glad I have at last come to the end of this long and wearisome book; and in future I promise not to trouble the public nor the circulating libraries again, until I have managed to compile a wondrous novel of the most sensational, impossible and worldly nature, such as young ladies love to read, (or rather to skim,) and reviewers delight to criticise, (because they do so without taking the superfluous trouble of reading them through, and understanding their purpose), and then perhaps when they receive that glittering toy, they will forgive the many faults of this "slow" journey "THROUGH THE AGES."

THE END.





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